

How do parental style, family structure, and ethnic  
background impact on the adolescent's understanding of  
moral responsibility?

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own work.

Martijn van der Spoel

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To my parents.

Your support and encouragement has been invaluable in discovering my place in this world.

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# **Abstract**

How do parental style, family structure, and ethnic background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?

This study is driven by the ongoing and complex social debate about the nature and formation of moral understanding among young people. The research is set within the context of the cognitive development theory.

This research seeks to examine the understanding of moral responsibility among 400 adolescents who are students at a mixed comprehensive school in the Greater London area. Primary attention is given to the variables parental style and ethnic background, and how these influence the subject's understanding of moral responsibility. Continuing from this focus, the researcher also explores how family structure, avoidance of moral conflict discussions, and religious orientation contributes to observed patterns between the primary variables and levels of moral responsibility scores.

Two types of research methods are employed, namely questionnaires and interviews. The funnel type of research enables the researcher to identify various groups with particular characteristics at an early stage in the study. Building on this knowledge and seeking to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of these characteristics semi-structured and focus interviews are used with carefully selected subjects.

This research concludes that parental styles and ethnic background have an influence on the understanding of moral responsibility. For example, it observed that subjects of different ethnic backgrounds perceive the effects of parental styles in different ways, which in turn affects their levels of moral responsibility. It was found that this was specifically evident with authoritarian families. This study did not record significant overall findings with regard to family structure, but establishes that there are clear links between avoidance of moral discussions and parental style as well the role of religion in relation to understanding of moral responsibility.

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# Introduction

# 1. Introduction

*Robert and his brother Daniel tried to steal a car in order to rob a bank. When it turned out that he couldn't start the car Robert decided to steal another car in which two 17 year-old boys, John and Michael were eating their lunch. Robert approached the car and forced them to drive to a quiet place outside the city. There, he ordered the two boys to get out of the car. As they walked away Robert slowly raised his gun and shot John in the back. He slumped and fell to the ground. Michael tried to escape and ran away but Robert chased him and killed him too. After killing the boys Robert just laughed, swinging his gun in the air.*

*At the end of a long working day the demoralised troops were dragged out into the courtyard. The camp Commander announced that they had counted the number of shovels they had been using and one was missing. In broken English, the commander started: "Unless the man who has stolen this shovel steps forward we will kill all of you." Nobody moved, but the British troops knew this was no idle threat. After what seemed like an eternity a big Scots Guardsman stepped out of the line, and the guards gathered round him and battered him to death with the butts of their guns. Later that day it was found that there had been a miscount and there wasn't a shovel missing at all. This man had willingly given his life for his friends.*

Two people... Two decisions... Two completely different endings... Why? Stories like these generate numerous questions that strike at the heart of moral understanding. For example:

- Why did they do it?
- What were they thinking at the time?
- How could one define their moral identity?
- In what kind of family did they grow up?
- What did the term 'moral responsibility' mean to them?

In recent decades the topic of moral education has become increasingly newsworthy, and countless media reports have dwelled on questions such as the ones above. One obvious reason for this is a growing public concern about the coherence of society as a whole. Stories like the one of Robert shake us, and journalists ask questions about the possible extent of moral decay.

The fact is that this concern is not unfounded. For example, James Clark and Nicholas Rufford, at the turn of the century, reported on the rise in

youth crime in this country.<sup>1</sup> They commented that 'young people in Britain are offending at more than twice the average level for their age groups across Europe'. A more recent study carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation hit the media with headlines such as 'A childhood culture of drugs, drink and crime'.<sup>2</sup> A picture is painted that goes beyond a few isolated individuals who happened to have taken a wrong turn... The scale of the issue, and its possible potential, are reasons to take the whole matter of moral understanding seriously. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation researchers identified, besides a catalogue of risk factors, a list of six protective factors. The latter included 'the need of strong family bonds', stressing the fact that moral development is a process involving people investing in an individual. The quest to understand better how this process is shaped and influenced is the driving force underlining this research. To guide the reader into this study the remainder of this introduction is divided into three parts. These are sections discussing, 'The big picture', 'The research question' and finally, an 'Overview of this study'.

## ***1.2. The big picture***

Literature relevant to the topic of moral responsibility covers many domains and disciplines in psychology. Furthermore, it has attracted such a vast amount of research interest and controversy that it is simply impossible to do justice to all aspects of this interesting field within the present context of this research. This should not be viewed a weakness because the topic under discussion is considered very complex and simply too broad to cover exhaustively for the purposes of this project. Having said that, this topical study would be at risk of losing its relevance if it was not carefully placed and connected within the rich field of ongoing research. Therefore, it is paramount for the reader to understand why the present researcher has selected this specific topic and how it is perceived to be significant as well as timely in relation to the larger body of research.

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<sup>1</sup> Times 04-01-00.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jrf.org.uk/pressroom/releases/080402.asp> and Metro 08-04-02.

A good starting point to address this issue is the researcher's interest in moral responsibility through his profession. As a Religious Education teacher and Head of Year at a secondary school in the North East of London, the researcher is daily involved in discussions with students and their parents as to what is right or wrong. Besides, the fact that these interactions are rewarding and often fascinating, they can also generate searching questions. How is it, for example, that one student only wants to emphasise his rights and finds it so hard to accept responsibility for himself? Or why is it that some students do wrong continually, while others are conscientious, whether you watch them or not? Furthermore, why do some parents phone the teacher to apologise for their child's wrongdoing, yet others lay the entire blame at the doorstep of the school? The list could go on and on, but these examples illustrate a clear point. Individuals have a different view of morality, and these viewpoints have a direct effect on the very people around them (teachers are but one example...). The process of identifying these differences and explaining how significant variables shape this development is relevant and timely. More precisely, this study on moral responsibility connects and interacts with the very questions raised within a multicultural society about communicating moral values to young people.

Given the widespread governmental, media, and academic attention to moral responsibility, one could ask how this research distinguishes itself. The answer lies in the choice of variables, the instruments deployed and attention given to the multicultural dimensions of British society today. The combination of the main variables, parental style, level of moral responsibility and ethnicity as well as the sub-variables of family structure and religious orientation is original. Furthermore, the instruments developed to examine the level of moral responsibility and the distinct manner of coding family interactions, based on previous research, are new tools. Last but not least, this research project addresses a weak, arguably missing link in the literature on moral responsibility, by examining two groups of British young people from distinct ethnic backgrounds.

The practical relevance of this research on the study of social issues should not be underestimated. It provides, among others, important leads to

discuss and examine how best to teach moral values in various ethnic contexts. This must be considered to be significant given the current emphasis on the teaching of citizenship at schools and the fostering of a better understanding between various ethnic groups in Britain.

### **1.3. Research question**

The distinctiveness of this research ties in with the general aim of responding to the need to develop, as Walker<sup>3</sup> puts it, 'more sophisticated understandings' of the impact different life contexts (i.e. friends, family, work / school, media, etc) have on the moral responsibility of individuals. The individual contribution of these variables and the interaction between each other is examined within the overall question as to what helps create the best learning environment for the moral responsibility. The underlining research question of this study is therefore:

***How do parental style, family structure, and ethnic background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?***

With this question as a starting point various more specific hypotheses are developed within the context of four research questions. These are listed at the end of this introduction. The relevance of each one, as well as the psychological context within which they have been explored and examined, are discussed in the Literature Review. Leading up to this, some overall comments regarding the direction and structure of the present study are judged helpful at this point.

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<sup>3</sup> Walker 1996.

## **1.4. Overview of this study**

To start this brief overview, it is important to stress that all data gathered views the issue of moral responsibility through 'the eyes' of the adolescent. Therefore, their perception, understanding and reflection form the basis of our examination and discussion of the growth of moral responsibility. Following on from this, the researcher's primary focus is to record and evaluate their stories in the light of other studies in the field.

It is recognised that gender could potentially have a significant influence on a topic such as the present one. The link between gender and the development of moral responsibility is therefore explored at the beginning of the project, helping the researcher decide whether it should be examined throughout the study as a key variable. The queries about the centrality of gender in this study are based on findings in other studies within the field, which are examined in more depth in the Literature Review.<sup>4</sup> With regard to gender, it must be noted that the participants in this study are generally referred to as male adolescents. This is done purely for grammatical and clarity reasons and should not be interpreted as a gender focus of the study.

Furthermore, it is obvious that a study like this needs to be conducted within a psychological framework. This is important for clarity's sake but is also essential for future comparison with other projects examining issues related to moral development. In this research the psychological framework selected as a starting point and to work within is that developed by Lawrence Kohlberg. His understanding of the potential benefits of moral conflicts create a valuable context within which the above research question is explored. However, it must be noted, that Kohlberg's theory is not free of its fair share of critics. Some of his claims have actually been shown to have considerable points of weakness and therefore will be discussed in relation to more recent studies. In other words, it is argued that a more up to date understanding of his theory will create a better context for the examination and evaluation of the development of moral responsibility in this study.

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<sup>4</sup> See section 2.3.4.



The Literature Review consists of four main parts. The first section aims to set the scene. Definitions of key words in the study are discussed as well as Kohlberg's psychological framework. In the second section the concept of moral responsibility is explored and how a strong and clear knowledge base can influence an individual's moral identity. Section three discusses the role of the family in relation to the development of moral responsibility. Here, attention is paid to the understanding of parental styles and how these are measured in this study. Furthermore, how parental styles and the actual structure of the family might affect how adolescents grow in their moral responsibility is examined. Also, this section will explore the best context within which to examine moral discussions and conflicts given the resources and position of the present researcher. Finally, section four explores the area of ethnic background and its relevance in relation to research in the development of moral responsibility. Each section concludes with a heading titled 'Research focus'. Here the researcher briefly lists the main points of the above section as they are judged to form the foundation of this study. If a hypothesis is a direct result of that particular discussion this will also be recorded. Some hypotheses involve several variables such as, for example, ethnicity and parenting style. In these cases the hypotheses are listed after both variables are discussed.

To examine the research questions and test the related hypotheses, two types of research methods are employed, namely questionnaires and interviews. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering was a conscious choice, since this combination provided the researcher with a creditable platform for gaining the most realistic understanding within the given boundaries of this study. All participants were given various questionnaires that enabled the researcher to identify and analyse patterns. This in turn produced an informed basis for selecting participants for the interviews.

As already pointed out in this chapter, the researcher had to be selective given the nature of this project. To enable the reader to appreciate more fully the overall research focus, this introductory section will conclude

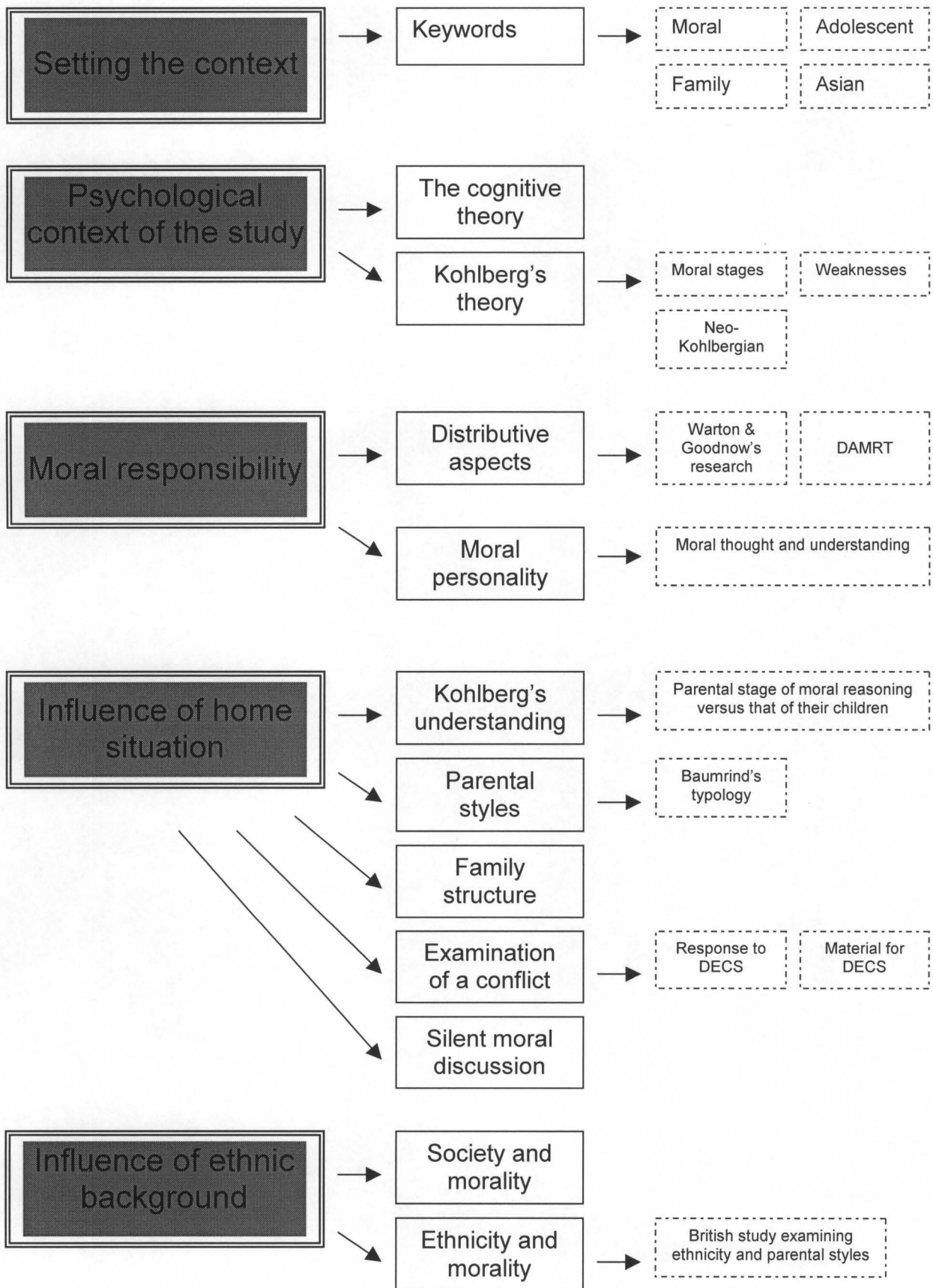
with the four research questions and thus provide the direction and framework for the discussion in the Literature Review.

Research question one:

1. Do parental style, family structure, and cultural background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?
2. Within the context of the understanding of moral responsibility of adolescents, how do parents with different parenting styles, family structure and cultural background communicate and formulate parental responsibility during a moral conflict situation at home?
3. How often and to what extent do adolescents avoid discussing their opinion regarding moral responsibility with their parents when they disagree with them ('silent argument')? Has the parental style, family structure, or cultural background a measurable influence on the frequency and nature of 'silent' disagreements?
4. In what sense does an understanding framework enable an adolescent to increase his moral responsibility?

# Literature Review

## Schematic overview Literature Review



## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. *Setting the context***

Considering the nature of the topic, studying moral responsibility is both exciting and rewarding. There is a sense of challenge and importance since it involves the very heart of being human. Consequently, questions about the source of morality in an individual, and the concern to teach young people right from wrong date back many centuries and cut across many civilisations. For example, in his book 'Republic', Plato (c. 430 – 347 BC) advocates that it is wise to restrict literature and drama for the young to that which is morally exemplary. The notion that moral responsibility is best understood in stages of growth takes, for the first time, a definite form in Thomas Aquinas' (1225? – 1274) discussion of the topic. The first modern thinker to make a significant contribution to a theory of moral responsibility was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778). He observed that individuals pass through age-related phases or stages before they reach maturity.<sup>1</sup> Later, Rousseau's thinking proved to be a very influential foundation for modern theorists. Since then much data has been collected and many researches, articles, and books have been written on the topic of moral responsibility. This wealth of information is obviously a tremendous asset, yet it has also, to a greater or lesser degree, caused a sense of confusion. For example, the vast body of academic literature shows that the topic can be examined in a variety of ways. Each of them starts with a philosophical basis and has its own set of assumptions. Moreover, the complexity goes far beyond the academic sphere. Society has undergone many changes in the last few decades. Day to day language, common attitude to right and wrong, and general understanding of authority illustrate this shift in thinking. On top of all that, the concept of what constitutes a 'family' or indeed a 'nation' has changed dramatically during this period too.<sup>2</sup> All these issues are exciting

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<sup>1</sup> In his book *Emile* (1762) Rousseau lists five stages; infancy (birth to three years), the age of sensation (four to twelve), the age of ideas (thirteen to puberty), and the age of marriage and social responsibility (twenty-one onwards).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Philips, 1996.

'material' for psychological research but must be placed within a clear context to make sense of it as well as to allow its findings to be compared with other research projects. Therefore, the first section of this chapter aims to explain how particular keywords in this study are understood and used within the context of the present research project. We will look in turn at the words 'moral', 'adolescent', 'family', and 'Asian'. Rather than giving a brief definition it is judged best to discuss each of these words to some extent in order to create an accurate foundation and reference point for the rest of this chapter.

## **2.2. Keywords**

*This section aims to explain how the words 'moral', 'adolescent', 'family' and 'Asian' are understood and applied within the context of the present research project.*

### **2.2.1. Moral**

During a lunch break at school, a colleague inquired about the progress of this research project. After having discussed some of its issues it became quite apparent that he reasoned from a clearly defined framework of moral understanding. He then proceeded by saying: "I'll give you an example of what I think is immoral. Look around you now, all the food the students just drop on the floor. That's what I call immoral!" This brief conversation illustrates the problem with defining this very word which is at the centre of this study. The colleague's understanding of morality undoubtedly was real to him. However, it is unlikely to find a philosophical text quoting this as an example of defining morality. The point is this: the words 'moral' or 'morality' are used in so many different contexts that a precise and conclusive definition is arguably impossible.<sup>3</sup> This tension is particularly noticeable between the two different disciplines of philosophy and psychology.<sup>4</sup> Since one could quite easily write an entire book on this very topic it must be underlined that this

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<sup>3</sup> Boyd, 1996, addresses philosophical issues arising from the past 25 years of work in the field of education.

<sup>4</sup> Winch, 1958.

section only seeks to set out how the word 'morality' is understood in this study rather than provide a detailed discussion.

Kohlberg's doctoral thesis on this topic could be seen as a groundbreaking research of the use of philosophy in empirical work. This resulted in a group of cognitive developmental psychologists together exploring the issue of morality as people experienced it in day to day living. Through time, this initial harmonious approach changed as more psychologists (for example, Gilligan and Shweder)<sup>5</sup> argued a different point of view. The various definitions and assumptions have created a sense of confusion fuelling the question as to how psychologists should define morality. Perhaps part of the difficulty lay in the fact that the role of the psychologist is misleading. For example, Blasi points out that both the psychologist and philosopher have unique positions of insight. However, their objectives and tools to test these insights are very different.<sup>6</sup> Whereas the philosopher's theory is 'evaluated according to standards of logic, rationality and moral adequacy', the psychologist is evaluated on his or her understanding of 'those psychological processes that underlie common understanding and are required by it.'<sup>7</sup> To take this point further, where philosophy seeks to evaluate and select on the basis of rational norms, a psychologist focuses on differences and his theory is a systematic and logical account of human behaviour. In other words, for clarity's sake it is paramount to recognise that the method and scope of the two disciplines determine its goals.

Therefore, what can, or cannot, psychological research achieve in relation to our understanding of morality? Four points are relevant in relation to this question.<sup>8</sup> First, unlike philosophy, psychological research can compare data against different theories of what morality should be. In other words, it does not focus on constructing a definition of morality but on understanding the moral functioning in an individual and, through this, society at large. Research can therefore focus on comparing people's responses to

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<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Kohlberg's links to Kant (1797), Frankena (1973), and Rawls (1971); Gilligan (1982) cites Blum (1991) and Murdoch (1992), and Shweder (1997) cites MacIntyre (1984).

<sup>6</sup> Blasi, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Blasi, 1990, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Blasi, 1990.

different philosophical theories and determine which theory accounts best for the actual moral functioning observed. Second, a psychologist ought not to decide whether one moral dimension (for example, justice, fairness or trust) should be more moral than another one. However, psychological research can establish how one of these dimensions came to be seen as right for an individual or a group of people. It might also be able to demonstrate how different genders and generations value or experience various moral dimensions differently. In other words, the psychological research examines how this process and its various influences shape the person's thinking and his actions, rather than state what is right and wrong. Third, psychology should not aim to determine the final goal of morality. However, careful studies can reveal that a particular stage has a stronger sense of logic or demonstrates a higher level of development of moral identity. Finally, psychological research can outline how different moral ideas are perceived over time and whether changes in moral thinking become prompts to search for new moral concepts.

In conclusion, it is evident that these points underline the fact that psychological research should be focused on developing instruments which help us gain understanding of when, how and why people morally reason and act the way they do. Within this process a definition of morality can help create clarity and often presents the study with an identifiable focus. However, this focus can equally become a limitation and prevent the researcher from fully appreciating an individual's thinking or reasoning simply because it does not square with the provided framework of the definition. The present study seeks to address the research questions within a broad definition of morality. Since absence of any form of definition does often encourage a lack of direction and purpose, three parameters are used for the overall context of data collection and the interpretation thereof. First, the action observed, examined or discussed needs to be intentional. This assumes a level of reasoning of the participant. Second, the moral action is in response to a sense of obligation. Blasi points out that obligation 'is understood here to have a motivational structure that essentially differs from



that of needs, wishes, desires, tastes, etc.<sup>9</sup> Finally, this obligation is perceived by the individual as the ideal goal. In other words, the individual feels that it is right and often acceptable to sacrifice personal time, energy, or liberty to achieve one's ideals.

### 2.2.2. Adolescent

What does adolescence refer to and why should exactly this part of the human development be placed at the heart of the present study? These are the two key questions addressed in this section. This period in an individual's life is characterised by rapid physical growth, which coincides with erratic emotional and moral change. Whereas many wish to have the strength of youth, they often will readily admit that their perception of these very same 'young adults in the making' is that their behaviour is frequently unreasonable, unacceptable and sometimes genuinely threatening. All this adds up to quite a puzzling experience for adolescents and adults alike. Nevertheless, the researcher wants to suggest that this challenging period provides him with an ideal context to study the development of moral responsibility. As will be discussed in more detail by examining Kohlberg's theory, it is this process of making sense of one's world that provides the crucial context for laying a moral foundation. To illustrate this, three key aspects of adolescent development are worth outlining at this point in our discussion.

First, the physical development. Puberty starts with increases in hormone levels, followed by physical changes. Hormones are often 'blamed' for change in conduct and an upsurge of risky behaviour. The latter might be linked to early sexual activities. Herbert comments that many parents fear their children might be hurt or even be exploited if they become sexually active too soon.<sup>10</sup> Sexual behaviour can therefore feature during moral discussions. The context here being broader than religious or conviction based discussions. For instance, evidence from recent studies suggests that there is a link between early sexual activity and social disadvantage as well as

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<sup>9</sup> Blasi, 1990, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert, 2003. See also, Gerrard, 2000.

antisocial behaviour.<sup>11</sup> In other words, physical development is not an isolated process but potentially affects moral reasoning and action.

Second, cognitive development. During adolescence, individuals increase their ability to speculate, hypothesise and fantasise; emphasising possibility more than reality. Their reasoning can be formal and abstract rather than only empirical and concrete. The ability to follow logical arguments and reason about social problems is increased.<sup>12</sup> This in turn affects their personal skills of communication, decision-making and negotiation.<sup>13</sup> Later in this chapter we will look in more depth at Kohlberg's focus on adolescence and how he considered the cognitive changes mentioned to be critical essentials for moral growth.

Third, psychosocial development. One of the major goals of adolescence is, as Erickson put it, 'identity achievement'.<sup>14</sup> Several levels of influence such as, personal factors (i.e. family and peer relationships), the nature of society, and economic and political circumstances are all instrumental in this development. The specific focus of this study is the parent – adolescent relationship. Carr's study is representative when it highlights that parent skills are often stretched by dealing with their offspring's increased assertiveness.<sup>15</sup> Demanding, frustrating or painful as these family times may be, it is this time of conflict studies that highlight as a major growth period for moral responsibility.

In short, adolescence is a stimulating period of life to explore for a psychologist, the main reason being that significant physical, cognitive and psychological development are considered paramount in the process that cements the building blocks of the moral foundation of an individual. In this research the 'adolescent' refers to Year 9, 10, and 11 students (14 – 16 years old). This group was selected because at this age the above-described levels of development are prominent. It was considered to include some Year 8 (13

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<sup>11</sup> Bingham and Crockett, 1996. Tubman, Windle and Windle, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Piaget's (1950) stages of 'concrete operational thinking' and 'formal prepositional thinking' are understood to deeply affect cognitive development during adolescence as they begin to free their thinking from its roots and focus more on their own particular experience.

<sup>13</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Most literature on this topic acknowledges research conducted by Erickson, 1968.

<sup>15</sup> Carr, 2002.

years old) students but a closer look at this section of the sample showed that quite a few of these students displayed only some signs that they had well and truly entered adolescence. In fact, some of them were still rather immature. Including their perspectives might have blurred the research focus since their answers might have come closer to child rather than adolescent responses. By only selecting Year 9, 10, and 11 students, the researcher selected a more homogeneous sample.

### 2.2.3. Family

In this study, family structure is identified as a variable likely to affect the development of moral responsibility. Although this hypothesis will be substantiated at a later stage in this chapter, some contextual issues regarding the word 'family' need to be clarified. When an adolescent says: "I spend my holiday with my family", what does he actually mean by that? Reality is that today's Britain is made up of many different types of families. To structure the information on this issue we will explain how the word family is used in the context of this study in two sub-sections, namely social and psychological.

From a sociological point of view, the family structure has undergone dramatic structural changes in recent decades. Specific examples of this are the single parent families and the so-called blended families that have increased significantly. In this study three types of families are referred to, namely; intact families, blended families, single-parent families. The 'intact family' is referred to when the adolescent is staying with his biological parents and has not known otherwise. For the large majority of cases this means that the parents are married. The term 'blended family' is used when the adolescent is staying with one biological parent and a stepparent. It must be noted that in this research the latter is understood in its widest context. For example, the father figure at home could be the mother's husband or her boyfriend. Finally, a single-parent family is the type of family where the adolescent lives with either his mother or father and no other parental figure in the house. Data from children who were in foster care, or for any other reason did not fall into any of these three categories, were left out of this

study. It must be stressed that this research does not aim to discuss the complex reasons for the structural change of families, neither does it seek to explain them. Rather, it hypothesises that such changes are likely to have effects on the moral development of the adolescent. It is not unreasonable to say that adolescents of, for example, two-parent and single-parent families, potentially show a difference in their emotional development.<sup>16</sup>

This leads us to the second aspect of this variable, namely the psychological effects of conflict and general well being in the various types of families. In recent decades, there has been significant research interest from a psychological point of view into the effects of differing family structures. Single-mother households and intact families have been a particularly favoured comparison. The effects of the subgroup single-father households have received least attention, although this is a growing group of single household families.<sup>17</sup> It is quite clear that an overview of psychological literature produces more questions than answers when it comes to the effects of various structural types of families on the moral development of an adolescent son or daughter. This, of course, is not to say that the issue can be ignored and any family can be compared with any other family. When in this study the word 'family' is used, the researcher distinguishes between 6 possible family structures.<sup>18</sup> Also, there is the understanding that family structure might significantly affect the adolescent's perception of morality and thus influence their moral growth. To what extent this will be carried forward as a variable throughout the study will be determined by the results of the questionnaires conducted at the start of the research. If at that stage there are indications that present data will render meaningful observations to the discussion briefly outlined above, the variable will be explored further. However, if there is no significant statistical result, preference is given to other variables for more in depth examination.

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<sup>16</sup> Amato and Keith, 1991; Smatana, Yau, Restrepo, and Braeges, 1991; Walker and Henning, 1997

<sup>17</sup> Walker and Hennig, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> This are, when home is called staying with, 'biological father and mother', 'biological mother and step father', 'step mother and biological father', 'biological mother only', 'biological father only' and 'other' (this sub group is not included in the analysis).

#### 2.2.4. Asian

Ethnicity is a key part of this study. Throughout this study the responses of two main groups are compared, namely British White and British Asian adolescents. For brevity's sake and also because of its current use in Britain today, British Asians are referred to as 'Asian'. British Whites are referred to as 'White'. The large percentage of Asian adolescents in this study are 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asian who came originally from Southern Asia. Before our discussion can turn to defining more clearly the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asian participants it is considered helpful to outline some key issues inherent to ethnicity. These are the question of definition, linguistic significance, and religious and cultural difference between ethnic groups.<sup>19</sup>

##### 2.2.4.1. Definition of Ethnicity

Defining ethnicity is far from simple or straightforward. Peach illustrates this by commenting:

While birthplace is an unambiguous category, ethnic identity is more mercurial. Critically, ethnicity is contextual rather than an absolute. One may be Welsh in England, British in Germany... A person may be Afro-Caribbean by decent but British in upbringing so that his or her census category might be either black-Caribbean or Black-Other... Thus ethnicity is a situational rather than an independent category.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear from Peach's description that the complexity of ethnicity is not only related to variety but is also characterised by an ongoing change as people move location. Added to this complexity is the fact that the majority of young people today have dual or mixed heritage backgrounds. Consequently, the term 'British Asian' is used.<sup>21</sup> The present study acknowledges the difficulties and sensitivities surrounding the definition of ethnicity. For the purposes of the present study, an approach by which ethnicity is regarded in a

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<sup>19</sup> This part of the discussion draws considerable information from a study conducted by the National Children's Bureau. Madge, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Peach, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Alibhai-Brown (1999) highlights that such terms are continually subject to change, as society becomes ever increasingly more diverse.

categorical sense, as recorded on the database of the school of the participants, is adopted.

#### 2.2.4.2. Language

Ethnicity includes language and the multi-ethnicity of London's inhabitants is reflected by its multilingual state. For example, it is estimated that languages other than English are now spoken in up to one in three homes in the capital.<sup>22</sup> Having said that, most adolescents (excluding recent refugees and asylum seekers) are considered fluent or reasonably fluent in English.<sup>23</sup> Ghuman found that, whereas out of the 50 Asian students he interviewed extensively, 99% were bilingual, and only half could read and write their home language.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it was not uncommon for the adolescent to speak to their parents in their mother tongue but converse with their siblings English. Hindus and Sikhs are found to be more positive to language change. Nearly all Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs prefer to keep Asian names.<sup>25</sup> These findings highlight the likelihood that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asian adolescent's world draws upon two cultures. It is important to explore this issue of ethnicity further to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to suggest that it distinctly affects their development of moral responsibility.

#### 2.2.4.3. Religion

The importance of religion is beyond doubt a significant component of ethnicity.<sup>26</sup> Whereas Britain is often seen to be a Christian country, figures of percentage representation can conceal the relevance of religion to the individual and its influence on their daily (moral) actions. For instance, Modood et al. found that religion was considered most important for Asian groups but significantly less for white members of the population.<sup>27</sup> An obvious observation, and yet an essential point to include in this brief

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<sup>22</sup> Madge, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Modood et al., 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Ghuman, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> For many of them, these are derived from holy religious texts and therefore have significant symbolic and emotional meaning for the individuals.

<sup>26</sup> Madge, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Modood et al., 1997.

discussion, is the fact that religious customs vary enormously. In this sense, ethnic groups are not excluded. Evidence for this is clearly substantiated by Sarwar's research among British Muslim young people.<sup>28</sup> United by a common creed, Sarwar concluded that through the influence of different countries, languages and cultures their needs could be recorded in many different ways. Ghuman found that Muslim communities in the UK are generally speaking more conservative than Hindus and Sikhs.<sup>29</sup> Adolescents from the latter faith communities repeatedly expressed that they valued the reverent atmosphere of the holy temples but found it hard to connect meaningfully with the archaic and traditional form of worship. In contrast, Muslim boys<sup>30</sup> are notably more likely to go to religion lessons and weekend schools at places of worship.<sup>31</sup> The role of religious beliefs on moral reasoning and its guide to moral action is only explored during the final focus interview in this research. This means that the variable is not considered to be the main focus of this study but the researcher does want to examine this to some detail since it can have such a significant influence on moral growth.<sup>32</sup>

#### 2.2.4.4. Culture

The word culture is in essence an overall term for the aspects of ethnicity discussed thus far. The purpose of this section is to briefly touch on aspects such as behaviour, attitude and lifestyle. For example, Asian adolescents will have to live by specific cultural expectations about dress and gender roles. In his study Ghuman cites a teacher illustrating the dilemma of parental values and Western ideals:

Yes, girls have less freedom. The girls cope well in the school and the majority accept that home is different. I took 9a to see King Lear. This father wouldn't let his daughter go but I persuaded him. We are finding that parents approach us about their anxieties. When we assure them

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<sup>28</sup> Sarwar, 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Ghuman, 1994.

<sup>30</sup> Mosque is a male dominated place. Females are encouraged to pray at home.

<sup>31</sup> Husan, and O'Brien, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Fowler, 1981; Fowler, Nipkow, and Schweitzer, 1991.

they (girls) would be safe, then they are more willing. But not on residential weekends; very few would be willing.<sup>33</sup>

A relevant observation, within this context, is that such issues, as described here, are considered by many parents as moral. A similar picture is presented when one looks at how adolescents spend their leisure time. For example, Asians are far less likely to join a formally organised activity group than their white friends.<sup>34</sup> It must be noted however, that the research conducted in this area is rather limited. Many aspects inherent to youth culture, such as music, doing things with friends, computers, etc. are fairly unexplored within the context of ethnic differences. Taking the three main religious groups, it is found that Muslims are understood to be stricter than Hindus and Sikhs.<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to mention within this context that Asian grandparents are more likely to live with their grandchildren in the same household.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the latter are more likely to have multiple attachments to parental figures.

#### 2.2.4.5. 'In between cultures'

Those encountering several cultures in everyday life are likely to adopt aspects of each.<sup>37</sup> This point is illustrated by Modood's research concluding that almost half of the Asian participants in their sample belonged to their religious communities and were 'culturally' British.<sup>38</sup> What exactly this mix of cultures means is not always entirely clear. This point is specifically underlined by research among various ethnic groups that found that Asians in particular felt that they had little in common with white families.<sup>39</sup> Husain and O'Brien may provide part of the answer through their finding among Pakistani Muslim families that the younger generations turn increasingly to a 'religious doctrine cleansed of cultural impositions.'<sup>40</sup> The complexity of this 'in between

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<sup>33</sup> Ghuman, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Madge, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Ghuman, 1994. See also Ghuman and Gallop, 1981.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas, 1995.

<sup>37</sup> Dosanjh and Ghuman, 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Modood et al. 1997.

<sup>39</sup> Beishson et al., 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Husain and O' Brien, 2001, p. 24.



culture' is highlighted by findings that some young people can perceive such enculturation as a rather difficult process. When looking at this issue, Bhatti found that Asian boys particularly were most likely to experience alienation and disillusionment with the older generation.<sup>41</sup>

In this study the variable 'ethnicity' is important. As outlined in the various sections above, the rich cultural background of the sample provides this study with interesting questions regarding development of moral responsibility. Given the fact that data in this research is gathered through 'the eyes' of the adolescents, an important issue is therefore to examine how much the participant is aware of the influence of his own culture (or mix thereof) on this process. The discussed aspects of culture help the researcher explore more fully the present research question in relation to the variable of ethnicity. For example, it is envisaged that Asian participants will elaborate more when culture related issues are explored during the focus interview. That is not to say White participants are not expected to have valuable points to make regarding their cultural influences. However, due to the higher level of exposure to different cultures, Asian participants are expected to be more aware of how a different culture can influence moral thinking.

At the outset of this research it must be noted that there is, of course, a danger in placing participants from various countries in the same category 'Asian'. Indeed it could be considered to be a limitation of this study. There are several reasons why the researcher has not chosen to break this variable up into different sub-variables. To start with, society at large (including the very group examined) refers to this section of the British population as 'Asian'. In other words, to classify Asians as a group is recognisable and acceptable in day to day conversation. Furthermore, the participants are 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asians. Therefore, one could assume that despite differences in their cultural heritage, more and more common factors will start to influence this population group simply because, to them, Britain is their country of birth. Finally, in comparison with other studies in this country it is common to research Asians as one identified variable. It must be said that in this respect the British

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<sup>41</sup> Bhatti, 1999.

context differs notably from that in the United States. Quite understandably so because in the latter country there are also many immigrants from Taiwan, South Korea, China, Philippines, and Vietnam. Consequently, within the context of the USA the term Asian is more complex.

However, this does not suggest the present researcher will not consider the complexity that this variable brings to the research project. This brief outline of issues related to ethnicity illustrates this awareness. The fact of the matter is that real life is seldom clear-cut and certainly cannot be presented in carefully labelled boxes. Since this study aims to explore how individual adolescents understand their moral responsibility to be influenced by their families, the data is expected to be richly diverse. Making sense of all that information involves a certain degree of labelling, but every effort will be made to use these labels to tell the story of the individual, rather than force observations and conclusions into 'boxes' which are easy recognisable.

#### 2.2.5. Research focus

- *A broad definition of the word 'moral' is considered most suitable for this study.*
- *Due to its complex and significant changes, adolescence forms an interesting focus to study moral responsibility.*
- *The term 'family' can be understood in many different ways. This research categorises the various types of family structures that are called 'home' by the participants of this project.*
- *Two ethnic groups are compared in this study; White and Asian. The latter are largely 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asians who originally migrated from the Asian subcontinent to Britain.*

## **2.3. Psychological context of the study**

*In this section Kohlberg's theory is outlined and discussed. Besides the strengths of this psychological framework, the weaknesses are assessed, as well as subsequent research insights addressing these issues.*

### **2.3.1. Moral development by moral reasoning: A cognitive development theory**

Underlining the concept of moral development is the assumption that human beings are not simply born morally mature. It is understood that an individual grows morally through a sequence of more or less gradual changes. For obvious reasons this thesis is not really seriously questioned by scholars. However, when one goes beyond this fundamental concept and asks how morality develops and, furthermore, which influences are significant for its progress, a wide variety of theories provides a vast range of possible answers. This section will discuss why the present research questions are explored within the structure of a cognitive development theory.

There are several major approaches to moral thinking. Two of these the present researcher would like to discuss within this context. Both have their own level of influence today and in history. Hayes shows that studies with a social learning focus predominantly featured during the 1960's and 1970's. This was followed by the cognitive research since the 1970'.<sup>42</sup> Both will be briefly discussed.

Social learning theorists<sup>43</sup> base their understanding of moral development on the fact that an individual's experience and behaviour is strongly influenced by people around them. Moral development is therefore understood to be a product of learning and conditioning or socialisation. Consequently, the social learning theorists argue that one must understand moral behaviour in terms of conformity to the expectations of those meaningful in the individual's world. While enjoying a significant level of

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<sup>42</sup> Hayes, 1994.

<sup>43</sup> In some literature referred to as 'Social influence theorists'.

popularity at first, the social learning theory was later criticised to for having serious shortcomings. It is suggested that the theory does not provide a sufficient basis for the nature of morality. Clouse comments that it does not give enough direction as to what kind of behaviour an individual should choose to be moral.<sup>44</sup> Although it is beyond doubt that social influence plays a significant part in moral behaviour, it does not account adequately for the process of independent moral judgement. Linked to this, the theory does not offer a sufficient explanation as to why some people reject social norms. Besides this, the social influence theory does not provide enough insights in regard to the internal factors of a person's character and therefore fails to examine an important aspect of moral development. In short, the theory is considered to be somewhat superficial for the research aims of this study.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike social learning theorists, cognitive theorists place significant emphasis on a person's individual consciousness and their ability to make (to a greater or lesser extent) sense of the world around them. As a result of this understanding, a person is perceived to have the ability to interact with the world. This places him in the position to play a significant and constructive role in his own development. Critical questions have also been raised about the cognitive theory of moral reasoning development. A good example, that shows the shortcomings of this theory is the link between moral growth and intellectual growth. There are many illustrations of highly intellectual individuals who have made extremely poor moral decisions. In other words, over-emphasis of the perceived relationship between cognitive ability and moral judgement does not mirror reality. Having said that, arguing against such a relationship altogether disregards the vital part cognitive development plays in the internalisation of morality.

Although there are shortcomings in the cognitive-developmental approach to moral development, it nevertheless provides the present researcher with a coherent and functional starting point to discuss the present research project of understanding moral responsibility among adolescents.

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<sup>44</sup> Clouse, 1993.

<sup>45</sup> These shortcomings became particularly evident to Kohlberg who, profoundly moved by the horrors of the Holocaust, judged this theory an inadequate response to the Nazi justifications leading to Jewish genocide.

The selection of the cognitive-developmental approach, rather than the social learning approach, lies mainly in the fact that the present project endeavours to explore the participants reasoning behind their understanding of moral reasoning. In that sense it overlaps with earlier work done by, for example, Kohlberg. However, it would be incorrect to assume that his approach to moral development is identical to the manner in which the researcher aims to gain a better understanding of moral responsibility. For example, this study has a particular interest in the role of the parents and ethnic background in relation to understanding one's moral responsibility. As will be discussed later Kohlberg himself understood both these variables and their influence on moral reasoning quite differently. Also, the data gathered examines the role of affective factors within this context, in contrast to the traditional cognitive-developmental emphasis on cognitive disequilibrium. Linked to this study it examines the relevance of real-life dilemmas in contrast to the paradigmatic emphasis on hypothetical dilemmas.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that many of the studies relevant to this research project are often, either directly or indirectly, linked or contrasted with the initial work conducted by Kohlberg. In this way one could argue that Kohlberg's influence on studies on the understanding of morality is significant. Therefore, even though it is not argued that his work is at the basis for the entire focus of this research project, Kohlberg's insights create a useful starting point and as such a framework to examine the various research interests in this study. Given the selection of this framework it is helpful to continue our discussion with a closer examination of the cognitive theory as Kohlberg sets it out. This will also be the basis to highlight weaknesses in this theory. By doing so the researcher links his work with further developments in the field of moral development and how these form the basis for the exploration of understanding moral responsibility in the present project.

### 2.3.2. Kohlberg's theory of moral development

For many, Lawrence Kohlberg's name is synonymous with the study of moral development from a cognitive perspective. It must be acknowledged, however, that his understanding of moral development is heavily indebted to

the work of Piaget who published his findings in a book entitled, 'The Moral Judgement of the Child'.<sup>46</sup> The large majority of present literature on moral growth, both in theoretical and research terms, is either directly or indirectly written within the framework provided by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. A main feature of their thinking and research is the various stages in moral reasoning.<sup>47</sup> Piaget made a distinction between moral realists and moral relativists. According to the Swiss intellectual, the phase of moral realism refers to young children structuring their thinking in line with their own experiences. Experience related to good behaviour is therefore 'classified' as good and visa versa.<sup>48</sup> An older child becomes, according to Piaget, a moral relativist. By this he means that a person can understand that viewpoints differ. He will start to appreciate that someone's experience or general background can 'shade' a conviction.

It would be wrong to assume Kohlberg just continued Piaget's work. In many ways his theory is distinct and more complex. For example, his research angle on moral development is rather more philosophical than that of Piaget. Throughout his studies he is not just concerned with the achievements of moral virtues but more so with the individual's understanding of certain principles of justice.<sup>49</sup> Aiming to redefine and validate Piaget's understanding of moral development, Kohlberg sets out to research larger

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<sup>46</sup> Piaget, (1932/1965). Without the influence of this great Swiss intellectual, modern study of moral development would look impoverished. His pioneering achievements in child psychology form an important basis for much of Kohlberg's thinking. It is assumed that the reader of this research has a sufficient understanding of Piaget's insights and research achievements. Piaget's theory on moral development is therefore not discussed in more detail. A clear and extensive review of Piaget's influence on Kohlberg's theory is presented by Lapsley, 1996, pp. 1 - 40.

<sup>47</sup> Piaget was the first scholar who attempted to test the validity of Dewey's understanding of moral development. See Archambault, 1964.

<sup>48</sup> Piaget conducted numerous interviews with children and observed their moral behaviour during games with rules.

<sup>49</sup> Many writers such as, for example, Lapsley, 1996; Noam and Wolf, 1991; Power 1991; Reed, 1991, link Kohlberg's first hand experience of suffering and injustice with his life long quest to understand the principles of justice. As a young man Kohlberg (1927 - 1987) encountered the genocidal "morality" of Nazism and post-war Allied policy regarding Jewish refugees. In Kohlberg's (1948) first published article called 'Beds for Bananas' an interesting account of this episode in his life is recorded. These experiences threw Kohlberg in a pool of profound ethical questions. The primary question centred around the possibility of moral universals, meaning seeking to understand whether morality is universal or only uniquely applicable to particular societies.

samples in longitudinal and socially diverse studies. Based on the findings of these studies, he defined 6 stages of moral reasoning.<sup>50</sup>

Kohlberg suggested that these stages have definite empirical characteristics. First, the stages form an invariant sequence. He argued that, except perhaps in the case of severe trauma, the development of the moral reasoning of an individual could not regress, nor could one by-pass a stage.<sup>51</sup> Second, the theory is based on a strict stage model, meaning that an individual is considered either to be 'in' a stage or is 'in transition' between two stages. Kohlberg pointed out that he always found more than 50% of his participants to be in one clearly defined stage.<sup>52</sup> Third, Kohlberg observed that the stages are 'hierarchical integrations'.<sup>53</sup> He argued that there is a significant relationship between the person's reasoning development (the intuitive, the concrete operational, and the formal operational) and their moral reasoning development. Developing this concept, Kohlberg reasoned that each person was regulated by a so-called 'ceiling effect', i.e. moral reasoning cannot rise above the individual's intellectual reasoning development. For example, a child whose logical stage is only concrete operational cannot rise above the pre-conventional level of moral reasoning (i.e. stages 1 & 2). It must be pointed out, however, that Kohlberg never suggested that high logical development guarantees high moral reasoning.<sup>54</sup>

### 2.3.3. Processes which stimulate progress through the moral stages

Hoffman rightly points out that initially Kohlberg's stage descriptions were more fully developed than his conception of the actual processes to help an individual's progress through the stages.<sup>55</sup> It is only in Kohlberg's later publications that we find a clearer and more detailed description of identified

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<sup>50</sup> For a more detailed definition of every stage see Appendix A. Source, Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 409 - 412.

<sup>51</sup> Kohlberg, 1969, 1981, 1986; Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969.

<sup>52</sup> Kohlberg, 1980.

<sup>53</sup> This understanding that higher stage thinking includes lower stage thinking was also one of Piaget's main focuses.

<sup>54</sup> Kohlberg found that over 50% of late adolescents and adults are capable of full reasoning, while a mere 10% of this group displays principled moral reasoning (stage 5 and 6).

<sup>55</sup> Hoffman, 1970.

ways and strategies to enhance moral reasoning development.<sup>56</sup> The two main processes put forward by Kohlberg are cognitive disequilibrium and role taking.

Cognitive disequilibrium in Kohlberg's theory is based on the understanding that the development of moral reasoning consists of a movement from one balanced state (i.e. equilibrium) to a more balanced state by way of imbalance (i.e. disequilibrium).<sup>57</sup> This concept of equilibrium / disequilibrium has gained much support from other researchers.<sup>58</sup> For example, Berkowitz et al. argues that the process of moral reasoning, as composed by Kohlberg, occurs via the relative balancing of the two complementary sub-processes of adaptation: Assimilation and accommodation.<sup>59</sup> Optimal disparity<sup>60</sup> occurs when a particular event is similar enough to the present stage attained by the individual for them to be able to assimilate, yet at the same time discrepant enough for the individual to be able to create an internal conflict (disequilibrium). Kohlberg commented that in order to accommodate the discrepancies and reduce disequilibrium, the individual would want to re-structure and re-organise their own thinking until a balanced state is again achieved.<sup>61</sup> One can conclude from the above that the actual nature and setting of the moral conflict, as well as the influence of the moral educator, (i.e. parent, teacher or significant other) play an essential role in fostering a climate for optimal disparity. The outcome of the individual's moral reasoning development is therefore closely related to conflict management.

The second process identified by Kohlberg is role-taking. He argues that moral reasoning stages also reflect a sequence of successive changes in role-taking ability.<sup>62</sup> He suggests that it is the very ability to listen and to understand another person's viewpoint that encourages moral growth.

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<sup>56</sup> Kohlberg, 1980.

<sup>57</sup> It must be noted that Kohlberg gained his understanding of equilibrium and disequilibrium from Piaget who uses these concepts in his theory of intellectual development.

<sup>58</sup> Amongst many others, Berkowitz et al., 1980; Colby et al., 1983; Lei, 1984; Page, 1985; Page and Bode, 1982; Powers, 1988; Walker, 1982, 1989; Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>59</sup> Berkowitz et al, 1980; Berkowitz and Gibbs, 1983.

<sup>60</sup> In the sense that the individual can move to the next moral stage.

<sup>61</sup> Kohlberg, 1975, 1976, 1981.

<sup>62</sup> Berkowitz, 1980; Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975; Kohlberg, 1980.



Kohlberg claims that this is specifically true of the transition from pre-moral to conventional morality. Role-taking is also understood to have a major influence on moral conflict since it provides the individual with various viewpoints, which in turn might initiate cognitive conflict.

#### 2.3.4 Weaknesses of Kohlberg's theory of moral development

Kohlberg's theory is not without its fair share of criticism. Part of this could be due to the fact that Kohlberg, like anyone of us, reasoned and reacted to the context of his time. His Jewish heritage (his attempts to help refugees) and national issues such the US Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War might have encouraged him to reach for answers in a particular direction.<sup>63</sup> Subsequent changes in society and more research findings have brought about new insights, which in turn questioned some of Kohlberg's philosophical assumptions or radical claims. Four perceived weaknesses need to be underlined at this point because of their overall relevance in relation to the research questions. These are the relevance of Kohlberg's hypothetical moral dilemmas in real-life situations, gender differences, the role of the family, and finally, the cultural (universal) validity claims of Kohlberg's theory. Since several of these topics are also discussed in more depth at other points in this chapter, the goal in this section is to highlight weaknesses and place it within the overall structure of the present discussion.

First, the over emphasis of a single research method has to be commented on. Kohlberg gathered his data through carefully designed moral dilemmas. Although the value of this method is not in dispute, it raises the question of whether it actually equips the researcher with all the relevant information to understand the totality of moral development. This concern is substantiated with considerable research evidence, concluding that Kohlberg's instruments to measure moral reasoning development are insufficiently related to the individual's day to day experiences in life.<sup>64</sup> To address this weakness other methods could be considered; for example, 'real-

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<sup>63</sup> Rest et al. 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Gilligan and Bekeley, 1980; Haan, 1975; Walker, 1989; Walker and Taylor, 1991; Yussen, 1977.

life' and 'self-generated' dilemmas of the participant's own experience as a starting point to assess moral reasoning. The strength of this method is that the researcher examines observations of moral dilemmas, and is given a window on how they are important to the individual. Arguably he is then drawn deeper into the complexity of real life and how that affects a moral decision. This study draws on data from a 'Kohlberg style' moral dilemma<sup>65</sup>, real life dilemmas<sup>66</sup>, and self-generated dilemmas<sup>67</sup>. Section 2.4.7. focuses on questions related to the strengths and weaknesses of the various methods of measuring moral development.

Second, there is the question of gender differences. It can be argued that Kohlberg's theory is too male centred, which is not surprising since he based his research on a male sample only! Gilligan, claims that there is a significant difference in the moral development of boys and girls.<sup>68</sup> Gilligan observed that females are more inductive while males are more deductive. She found that females are more concerned about the needs of others rather than the rights of others. They accept caring as the basis of morality whereas males are more likely to argue that justice is the foundation of the moral quest. Consequently, Gilligan faults Kohlberg for only using male participants in his studies. By doing this, she claims Kohlberg has relegated the female characteristics to a lower stage (i.e. stage 3) and similar reasoning of the males to a higher stage (i.e. stage 4). Gilligan highlights that Kohlberg's approach has the tendency to place too much emphasis on the link between moral development and cognitive development. It is obvious from Gilligan's publications that she is not arguing that the ethic of care is inferior to other ethical versions. Rather she claims that any workable theory of moral development must take into account the importance of the relationships between autonomy and care for others. Kohlberg's theory, she argues, is overly rationalistic and overly individualistic.<sup>69</sup> Gilligan's research evidence

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<sup>65</sup> See section 2.5.7.

<sup>66</sup> The case-studies in the moral responsibility questionnaire, see section 2.3.5.

<sup>67</sup> The focus interview, see section 3.9.

<sup>68</sup> Gilligan, 1982.

<sup>69</sup> This conclusion is supported by Baumrind's (1986) research. Recognising the various roles Gilligan and Kohlberg have in the moral debate she stresses the importance of describing the theoretical construction one claims to have measured.

and observations are insightful and must not be overlooked. The specific question for the present study is, however, whether gender differences will be measured as a significant result in this sample. The Literature shows this is not always the case.<sup>70</sup> Gender data will therefore be analysed separately on the basis of the questionnaires. If there proves to be a significant statistical difference this variable will be carried forward throughout the study. If this is not the case, it is suggested that the present sample is possibly not large enough to further comment on gender matters in a meaningful way.

Third, Kohlberg argued that, while not insignificant, family participation, identification with parents, parental warmth and nurturance were not considered to play a critical role in the moral reasoning development of the adolescent. Consequently, several cognitive developmental models have tended to suggest that parents play a rather limited and sometimes even a non-specific role. For example, the influence of peers was often understood to be the most important moulding factor for moral reasoning development. At this point it is not so much an issue of what Kohlberg emphasised but rather what he failed to emphasise. In other words, by concluding that parents have only a marginal effect on the moral growth of their adolescents he limited their influence too much and consequently failed to further explore it thoroughly. This is judged by the present researcher to be disappointing given the potential of this unique relationship. Therefore, in response, the present study will focus on moral responsibility within the context of interactions at home. The issue will be discussed in more detail under the heading, 'The influence and contribution of the home situation on moral responsibility', section 2.5.

Finally, questions have been raised regarding the universal use of Kohlberg's theory since it so heavily relies on a Western liberal democratic ideology.<sup>71</sup> A closer look at this issue shows that this quest of defining morality is heavily rooted in Kohlberg's formative experiences during his

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<sup>70</sup> Walker (1984) compared 108 studies and found only 8 with significant statistical sex differences. He concluded that gender differences in moral reasoning are rare. See also, Brabeck, 1983; Rest, 1979; Walker, 1984, 1991.

<sup>71</sup> For example, Verhoef and Michel (1997) point to the fact that the criteria that characterise the higher stages of moral reasoning are derived from theoretical assumptions of philosophers such as Kant (1797) and Rawls (1971). This observation has of course a considerable effect on the cross-cultural usage of Kohlberg's theory.

youth. Reflecting on this, Lapsley comments that Kohlberg was a 'mind concentrated on an idea', and, that his life became the 'obsessive personification' of this idea.<sup>72</sup> The simplest way to describe this idea is Kohlberg's desire to articulate adequately moral universality in the face of moral relativism. As a young man he encountered the Nazi atrocities and saw the construction of a universal moral code as a critical factor in the fight against brutality and injustice.<sup>73</sup> In short, Kohlberg's research was rooted and driven by his personal experiences, idealism and quest to fight evil, as he perceived it in the world around him. Subsequent studies have, however, questioned the extent of the strength of Kohlberg's claims regarding moral universality. For example, Rest et al. comment that more recent philosophers such as Beauchamp and Childress, understand morality increasingly as a result of community enterprise.<sup>74</sup> Morality is then perceived to be 'a social construction, evolving from the community's experiences, particular institutional arrangements, deliberations, and the aspirations that are voiced at the time and which win the support of the community.'<sup>75</sup> This different outlook on morality across the world is not in line with Kohlberg's explicit claims. Taking this point a step further the work of the psychologist Shweder is worth mentioning. His research stresses the complexity of moral reasoning, especially when considered within the context of the individual's own worldview.<sup>76</sup> If this is the case one can argue that Kohlberg's universalistic morality fails to appreciate the diversity of different cultures and their influence on the construction of a moral identity. His claim cannot be matched with all research findings in diverse cultures. Moreover, one wonders where his quest eventually would lead to and whether it actually nullifies Kohlberg's fear of mindless moral relativism? However this is more a philosophical question. From a psychological perspective, linking ethnicity and morality remains an interesting area to explore. Particularly so since it is evident that many questions still remain unanswered. The specific interest of this study is

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<sup>72</sup> Lapsley, 1996, p. 41.

<sup>73</sup> Reed, 1991; Power, 1991; Noam and Wolf, 1991.

<sup>74</sup> Rest et al, 2000. Beauchamp and Childress, 1994.

<sup>75</sup> Rest et al., 2000, p. 385.

<sup>76</sup> Shweder et al., 1987.

whether one can observe cultural differences within adolescents of second generation Asians living in Britain. Linking this Asian culture within a British culture raises questions about moral growth, an issue which has not been examined extensively in this country. The formulation of this hypothesis is developed under the heading titled 'The influence and contribution of ethnicity on moral responsibility' (see section 2.6.).

### 2.3.5. Validity of the neo-Kohlbergian approach to moral research

With the benefit of hindsight and decades of new research and development in psychology one expects changes to Kohlberg's theory. Building on his core assumptions, Kohlberg's theory has gained a somewhat different model of moral judgement development. In this regard the work conducted by James Rest is of particular significance. Rest's approach to moral development is comprehensive and constructive, which on the one hand follows Kohlberg's framework, yet on the other, takes the above outlined weaknesses seriously and interacts with them. The result is the Neo-Kohlbergian approach to morality based on twenty-five years of data collection.

This theory is in agreement with Kohlberg that the starting point for inquiry should be cognition. Furthermore there is the same emphasis on the personal construction of 'basic epistemological categories'<sup>77</sup> (for example, rights, duty, justice, and social order). The theory, like that of Kohlberg, sees change over time in terms of development. Finally, it also characterises the developmental change of adolescents and adults in terms of a shift from conventional to postconventional moral thinking.

The difference between the theories is signalled by the term 'schema'. Rest et.al. call Kohlberg's moral stages 'schemas' to indicate their distinct understanding of this process. They do not agree with Kohlberg's idea of the strict understanding of clear identifiable (sometimes called 'hard') stages. They favour a more complex change, moving from one level of understanding

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<sup>77</sup> Rest et al., 2000, p. 383.

to the other. Discussing the concept of schemas, Narvaez and Bock start to describe schemas as 'sets of expectations, hypothesis and concepts that are formed as the individual notices similarities and recurrence in experience'.<sup>78</sup> In this sense the Neo-Kohlbergian approach are 'conceptions of institutions and role-systems in society, whereas Kohlberg regards social institutions as "content."<sup>79</sup> For instance, a young child might learn that certain types of his behaviour generate a specific response from his mother. He will then start to expect this response. However, when, on a certain occasion, his mother reacts in a very different way the child will be confused, since this reaction does not fit the schema he has developed in line with previous experience.

Derry looks at the hierarchy of schemas in a more concrete way by highlighting three distinct areas that describe this cognitive process of decision making.<sup>80</sup> These are memory objects (identifiable units of related characteristics), cognitive fields (an activated set of memory objects) and mental models (the meaning of the experience or situation). It is judged useful to see moral judgement in this manner because it seeks to address the complexity of the decision making process. For example, one could say that individuals with a more complex moral judgement have a larger set of memory objects. This can be activated within multiple cognitive fields, which in turn form part of complex mental models. One could argue that an individual could have layer upon layer of memory objects and cognitive fields that form a mental model. A moral decision could therefore access and interact with layers of interrelated schemas. Although it is not possible to formulate the exact architecture of these schemas one can observe that the expert has great resources of knowledge while the novice may only have a bare foundation.

Given the complexity of this process it is important to stress that schemas involve multiple brain systems. Given this understanding the cognitive operations and the content-output of operations are viewed differently in the Neo-Kohlbergian approach. Whereas Kohlberg claimed to research 'justice operations', Rest et al. do not maintain that schemas directly

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<sup>78</sup> Narvaez and Bock, 2002, p. 300.

<sup>79</sup> Rest et al., 2000, p. 385.

<sup>80</sup> Derry, 1996.

assess cognitive operations. They stress that Cognitive Science has moved on since Kohlberg's era and there is now less attention to purging all content from structure. Gazzaniga et al. state: 'A vast amount of research in cognitive science clearly shows we are conscious only of the content of our mental life, not what generates the content.'<sup>81</sup> In other words, an individual might suggest that they know what the processes are, but in reality they are only reporting on what they think produces the final content of their consciousness.

Examining the question as to how schemas work Rock points out that they operate constantly in the individual's mind and are constantly activated by stimuli.<sup>82</sup> These stimuli can come from all sorts of sources. The value of each of them is processed which, in turn, influence the already established schemas. For example, an individual might hear on the TV the viewpoint that a certain minority in society should be seen as a terrorist group. The fact that this individual has a close friend of this minority group will influence the way he comes to decide whether the expressed viewpoint is respectable. Another mental layer he might interact with is whether he sees himself as a racist or not and what this means in the way he relates to this minority group. Seeking to understand how the schemas are connected Marshall understands schemas to be like storage devices.<sup>83</sup> Each represents an organised network structure of memory objects. The ability to connect between schemas is understood to depend on the type of relationship (whether it is positive or negative) and the degree of strength.<sup>84</sup>

The question is often raised whether a particular schema can actually change. Looking at this issue Hogarth concludes that schemas can change through the assimilation of and accommodation to a different experience.<sup>85</sup> Derry points out that, through time and new experiences, schemas can

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<sup>81</sup> Gazzaniga et al., 1998, p. 532.

<sup>82</sup> Rock, 1997.

<sup>83</sup> Marshall, 1995.

<sup>84</sup> Marshall, 1995.

<sup>85</sup> Hogarth, 2001.

change in size and increase in strength.<sup>86</sup> Gijsselaers and Woltjer found that the individual change of schema also relates to the increase of knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

On the basis of this theory, Rest and his colleagues designed an instrument to test moral reasoning called the 'Defining Issues Test' (or DIT). In their book on the DIT they draw on research from over 400 published articles and a substantial number of unpublished studies to establish seven validity and reliability criteria.<sup>88</sup> This list is further looked at in the next chapter (Methods Chapter section 3.5.).

With a vast database in its support, the neo-Kohlbergian approach has clearly sought to address some of the expressed weaknesses of the traditional theory of Kohlberg. By doing so, it forms a reliable starting point and reference as well as a tested framework from which the present research questions can be explored. Because of these characteristics the DIT is considered to be the best instrument to test whether the present sample has comparable moral judgement levels previous research projects.<sup>89</sup> Given the fact that a new instrument will be used to measure moral responsibility, the researcher judged it to be important to establish that the present sample is sufficiently average in their moral reasoning levels. If this is the case, one can compare data gathered in this study with other studies in this field with a higher degree of confidence. Although it is understood that the participants in this study are not the most academically able for their age group, it is hypothesised that they are sufficiently average in their moral reasoning ability to compare outcomes of this study as a whole with other research projects.

### 2.3.6. Research focus

- *In this study, the concepts of the cognitive reasoning theory of Lawrence Kohlberg are chosen as a starting point for understanding moral responsibility.*
- *The role of conflict and the management thereof, are central to moral responsibility. In this study the perceived nature and*

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<sup>86</sup> Derry, 1996.

<sup>87</sup> Gijsselaers and Woltjer, 1997.

<sup>88</sup> Rest et al., 1999.

<sup>89</sup> Rest et al., 1997; 1999.



*outcome of moral discussions and conflict situations are an important focus of data collection.*

- *Kohlberg's theory has its weaknesses that fuel part of the present research focus. The Neo-Kohlbergian theory is judged and chosen as a more up to date cognitive theory of moral growth to structure the present research.*
- *Gender significance will be determined on the basis of the questionnaires and consequently it will be decided whether the variable is to be examined throughout the rest of the study.*
- *Hypothesis:*

*In line with scores established through the DIT, the participants will show to be a comparative sample with average moral reasoning levels.*

## **2.4. Moral responsibility**

*This section discusses a framework within which to explore the nature of moral responsibility. Also, an individual's understanding of moral responsibility is examined in relation to the issue of moral identity and moral action.*

Being responsible can mean several things, such as; 'Doing that which needs to be done', 'Being reliable and dependable,' 'Being accountable', 'Fulfilling moral obligations', 'Using good judgement and thinking through the consequences of your actions', or ' Exercising self-control'.<sup>90</sup> Unell and Wyckhoff emphasise that all these different aspects and levels of responsibility are essential not only to the survival of the family, the society in which the individual functions but also his self-respect.<sup>91</sup> This suggests that owning responsibility is more than just being trained to make the right

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<sup>90</sup> <http://www.goodcharacter.com/Responsibility.html>

<sup>91</sup> Unell and Wyckoff, 1995.

decision. It also involves a degree of understanding, i.e. knowing why one wants to be reliable and dependable. It is this cognitive process, leading to greater self-respect, which highlights the importance of a thorough understanding of the nature of responsibility. This section will first discuss a framework within which to assess the nature of moral responsibility, after which attention will be given to the power of knowing one's moral responsibility.

The key to these studies is the quest to find ways that enable the researcher to conceptualise and explore the development of responsibility. One way psychological theorists have often referred to responsibility is to understand it as a form of pro-social behaviour.<sup>92</sup> For example, an individual demonstrates a willingness to help, which in turn is strengthened by encouragement and credited by praise or a reward. However, Goodnow found that this kind of willingness to help could not always be linked with various types of responsibility.<sup>93</sup> She suggests that theorists might have to rethink some of their previous assumptions.

A different approach is supported by recent research that explored a cognitive approach, aiming to gain a more complete understanding of the nature of responsibility.<sup>94</sup> The emphasis in these studies is on exploring the norms or principles (i.e. issues examining whether a person is liable, blameable, or deserving punishment) on which judgements about responsibilities are based.<sup>95</sup> This research approach is also in line with Heider's classical research on the attribution of responsibility focusing on factors such as intentionality, ability, and foreseeability.<sup>96</sup> Heider points out that people who act intentionally are generally held more responsible than someone's clumsy act. Furthermore, if someone is trying to help but simply has not got the ability to do so, he is not seen to be responsible. Heider places foreseeability within the context of a direct or indirect effect of an individual's action. For example, a moment of moral weakness or negligence

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<sup>92</sup> Elder, 1974; Harris, Clark, Rose, and Valasek, 1954; Rheingold, 1982.

<sup>93</sup> Goodnow, 1987.

<sup>94</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991.

<sup>95</sup> Glover, 1970; Hart and Honoré, 1985. Kleining, 1973.

<sup>96</sup> Heider, 1958.

can have major repercussions and be destructive. The person might not have intended to harm but the fact that restraining forces were lacking communicates a level of responsibility. In other words, he should have foreseen that his action would cause a negative outcome.

However, there are a few areas of concern that are highlighted by using the cognitive approach. To start with, criticism has focused on the gap between everyday experiences (especially those of children) and philosophical and legal discussions. For example, stressing the liability aspects of responsibility can quite easily result in a predominantly academic and philosophical discussion with little value to the quest of understanding everyday responsibility issues. Furthermore, focus on the responsibility of the individual has given insufficient attention to a major aspect of responsibility, which is its distributive aspect.

Seeking to establish a stronger link between theory and everyday life and its inclusion of the distributive aspects, Warton and Goodnow's study on the nature of responsibility is judged to be particularly helpful.<sup>97</sup> Their research seeks to explore children's understanding of "Your Job". The particular research focus is to examine to what extent 'children endorse some specific principles, and the nature of any developmental progression within the context of household work.'<sup>98</sup> Since their observations and findings create a valuable context for the present research questions it is judged helpful to discuss Warton and Goodnow's study in more detail.

#### 2.4.1. Distributive aspects of responsibility

The key to Warton and Goodnow's research is its emphasis on the distributive aspects of responsibility. They favour this research approach since it provides significant insights into the 'extent to which other people may be expected to contribute to getting an activity started or seeing it through.'<sup>99</sup> It is also pointed out that it provides the researcher with a valuable conceptual link between specific studies about the nature of responsibility and the wider,

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<sup>97</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991.

<sup>98</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991, p. 156.

<sup>99</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991, p. 157.

related studies dealing with judgements about other forms of allocation between individuals. Damon's works on equality and equity, and Youniss and Smoller's work on obligations in friendships, are examples of this type of research approach.<sup>100</sup> Examining moral responsibility in this manner highlights another link: comparisons can be made between the literature on rights and authority on the one hand and research on principles, such as moral conventional or personal jurisdiction, on the other hand.<sup>101</sup>

Warton and Goodnow point out that the great value of these studies lies in the fact that they provide the researcher with several significant leads to analyse distributive norms in everyday situations. First, they suggest the studies demonstrate that the use of specified principles is feasible. Second, the studies underline the need to go beyond the actual judgement answer of the participant and explore in more depth the reasons at the basis of the answer. Third, they suggest that no single age progression may apply to all principles.<sup>102</sup> It must be noted, however, that the above studies are limited to the extent that they focus predominantly on the rewards and rights of justice, i.e. the distributive justice of goods. In an attempt to re-address this Warton and Goodnow, in their research, have also paid attention to the burdens of justice, i.e. the principles that apply to work allocations.

#### 2.4.2. Warton and Goodnow's research and its conclusions

Warton and Goodnow examined the nature of responsibility by looking at how 104 children of 8, 11 and 14 years old understand 'Your job'.<sup>103</sup> All children had at least one sibling 5 years of age or older. All were 'Anglo-Australian' and came from a middle-class background. The majority (93/104) were from two-parent families. Their study considers three possible principles, namely:

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<sup>100</sup> Damon, 1977. Youniss and Smollar, 1985.

<sup>101</sup> Laupa and Turiel, 1986; Nucci, 1981; Smetana, 1988.

<sup>102</sup> This would particularly be linked with Nucci's research.

<sup>103</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991. 'The Nature of Responsibility: Children's Understanding of "Your Job".'

1. direct-cause responsibility ( e.g. people should fix problems they have created)
2. self-regulation (e.g. you should not be reminded nor be paid)
3. continuing responsibility (e.g. even if others agree to do a job that is usually yours, you still remain accountable)

Warton and Goodnow note that the above principles are obviously not the only ones that might be explored. In brief, the following factors have influenced their decision. First, it must be in line with the term 'principle', meaning that when violation takes place there is a sense of indignation.<sup>104</sup> Second, the situations discussed are judged to be meaningful to the participants. Third, these principles are characterised by a developmental span. Warton & Goodnow concluded that although the three principles do not show the same age changes, nonetheless, there is a broad developmental progression. Lastly, these principles are enforced by adults, i.e. that they agree that there is a right or a wrong in this particular aspect.<sup>105</sup>

Warton and Goodnow observed that some differences occurred among the principles. They suggest that these could be accounted for by the lack of experience. For example, an 8-year-old may lack the relevant knowledge required to fully grasp the essence and / or options of a given principle. Another reason could be that some of the rules / standards set (and hence requiring responsibility) are, as Smetana calls them "multifaceted".<sup>106</sup> This means that one and the same rule relates to two levels of responsibility; for example, a child is told to tidy away their toys from the living room. On one level this is their responsibility because the toys are theirs. On another level a sense of convention is at play, i.e. parental rights to tell them to clean up. Warton and Goodnow link, in particular, the low score on the fairness of continuing responsibility to this multifaceted quality.

In the light of the present research questions our main interest lays specifically with the third conclusion of the study we have discussed. Warton and Goodnow's study clearly provides a valid basis to extend this research

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<sup>104</sup> Warton and Goodnow suggest that a sense of surprise or embarrassment is not sufficient.

<sup>105</sup> For a more extensive and detailed discussion on each principle and the reasoning behind the choosing of it, see Warton and Goodnow's (1991) article, pp. 157-158.

<sup>106</sup> Smetana, 1988.

approach to samples with adolescents and other 'work' settings. For example, the principle of self-regulation has proven to be applicable to adults, adolescents as well as children. Moreover, it can be related to paid work situations but also to schoolwork or homework responsibilities. These findings form, therefore, a useful basis for further studies to explore how relevant the three principles are given different contexts and questions. For instance, questions related to universal rightness of behaviour or situations requiring moral reasoning skills. The present study also suggests that more research is needed to understand the effect of the individual's experience on his understanding of the responsibility issue, and, more specifically, to understand the effects of different contexts. It is this very focus that this study wants to explore further. While using the three principles of responsibility, this study gives a different meaning to the term 'Your Job'. Rather than examine the nature of responsibility from the context of household chores, this research extends it to moral situations. It is the results of the 'Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test' that will form the basis for exploring the research questions on the influence of parenting styles, family structure and ethnicity on development and nature of moral responsibility (cf. research questions 1 & 2). Section 2.4. and 2.5. in this chapter will unpack these issues further and articulate more precisely, how and in what way, each of these influences are examined.

#### 2.4.3. Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test<sup>107</sup>

The construction, test procedure and selection of participants for this test is discussed more extensively in the next Methods chapter.<sup>108</sup> However, a brief description is considered helpful at this point to explain how Warton and Goodnow's findings have been used to examine moral responsibility in this research. The Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test falls into two parts; a quantitative and a qualitative test. The test is in essence based

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<sup>107</sup> See Appendix D, also referred to as DAMRT.

<sup>108</sup> See section 3.6.

on Warton and Goodnow's work.<sup>109</sup> The goal of the first (quantitative) test is to access the participants' 'fairness judgement' in a number of situations calling for moral responsibility. Each of the case studies is listed under one of the three principles as described above and are based on situations both in school and outside of it.<sup>110</sup> The studies also include cultural 'angles' to explore responses from different ethnic groups. The researcher of this study developed this test. Since the results of the test form a significant part in the rest of the study it is important to link the outcome of the DIT with the Moral Responsibility Test. In other words, the scores in both tests are expected to complement each other since both relate to moral reasoning of the individual. It is therefore hypothesised that participants who score high moral responsibility levels<sup>111</sup> will also score high moral reasoning levels.<sup>112</sup> The questionnaire is followed by semi-structured interview, using a selected number of participants. The main purpose of looking at these situations again is to establish the justification of the fairness judgement in relation to their perceived moral responsibility.

#### 2.4.4. Moral thought and behaviour and the integrated power of understanding

From the discussion above it is clear that Kohlberg's theory describes developmental changes in the understanding of justice. He argues that moral reasoning structures become progressively complex until the principled point of view is clear and focused. But the question must be asked: how does this moral focus translate to moral behaviour? In other words, knowing the right thing to do is very different from actually doing it!

Kohlberg suggested that moral judgements could be best seen as a lens through which an individual understands social situations.<sup>113</sup> The

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<sup>109</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991.

<sup>110</sup> The situations can be understood as real-life moral responsibility dilemmas in the sense that they are based on discipline issues within the school, examples from discussion sites on the web, and conclusions from a questionnaire among seventy-five students in Year 9 at the school.

<sup>111</sup> I.e. Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test results.

<sup>112</sup> I.e. Defining Issues Test results.

<sup>113</sup> Kohlberg, 1989.

more advanced the person becomes in his moral judgement the more he will sense a moral obligation to act in a perceived morally correct manner. In other words, the individual will see that reasons are motives for action. Researches examining this connection have observed that those individuals with higher levels of moral reasoning are more likely to display perceived morally correct behaviour.<sup>114</sup> Lapsley argues that this can be explained by the way that people with higher moral reasoning levels see themselves.<sup>115</sup> He observes that such individuals are more likely to judge that the self is responsible for putting their moral thinking into action. They realise that moral principles are prescriptive and that the corresponding moral judgements are obligatory and binding. In other words, the more they own the moral judgement and the deeper their understanding of it, the more likely they are to put thought into action.

Thus far this chapter has examined several of the main criticisms levelled against Kohlberg's theory. This has generated many research questions, which is a welcome development. However, a process such as this must guard against a movement with pendulum momentum. The present researcher wants to suggest that, at times, this has actually happened in reaction to the cognitive theory. In general one could say that morality has an objective aspect. People tend to perceive that values in general have a central objective aspect, unlike one's taste or preference, for example.<sup>116</sup> If such is the case then cognition and the development thereof, are essential for moral growth. Accepting this point does not equal total acceptance of Kohlberg's theory but reminds the psychologist of the necessity of a cognitive aspect in an effective theory of moral development.

The above conclusion is a sufficient basis to justify the argument that moral understanding must from the start be linked with the process of moral integration. This notion is also reflected in the Piagetian concepts of assimilation and structure. Within this context understanding implies the ability to assimilate a new object or new experience. Put differently, it means to integrate a new object or experience into an already existing structure.

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<sup>114</sup> Malinowski and Smith, 1985; Blasi, 1980; Jurkovic, 1980.

<sup>115</sup> Lapsley, 1996.

<sup>116</sup> Nisan, 1988.



Piagetian theories also suggest that knowledge could be seen as a treasured possession of an individual. The person will deliberately seek it and experiences a sense of responsibility for its correctness and truth.<sup>117</sup> However, these concepts have not found their way into many research projects and by and large have not had the attention they deserves within contemporary cognitive psychology.

Given the present research context the researcher wants to include this aspect of cognitive understanding in relation to moral responsibility. This is a question about how issues such as judgement, knowledge and conviction have influenced the moral identity of the adolescent. Can one show, for example, that particular types of knowledge actively shape and heighten the level of moral responsibility? In this research the knowledge base chosen to examine this question in more depth is that of commitment to a specific religion. Participants who have a self-confessed faith structure are asked about their understanding of faith in relation to moral decisions. By doing so the researcher will examine the influence of the faith structure on the moral responsibility and the integration process.

It is important to note that within the field of moral psychology, religion has only gained more attention in recent years. Consequently, there is not a wealth of research data to refer to in this respect. In fact, Kohlberg suggested early in his career that the moral and religious domains should be perceived independently from each other.<sup>118</sup> This might be linked to the academic climate at the time, where secular humanism was strongly favoured. Much later Kohlberg took a less adverse stand when he postulated the 7<sup>th</sup> moral stage.<sup>119</sup> However, due to the complications of gathering empirical evidence for this stage with a mystical connotation, research interest in the link between religion and moral development was extremely limited.

In more recent years some empirical research findings suggest that the relationship between religion and moral responsibility might be more significant than previously thought. A particularly interesting study within this

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<sup>117</sup> Blasi, 1983.

<sup>118</sup> Kohlberg, 1967.

<sup>119</sup> Kohlberg, 1981.

context is the one conducted by Colby and Damon.<sup>120</sup> They studied a small sample (n=23) of individuals leading an exceptional life of moral commitment and action. The participants for this study were selected by a panel of ethical experts, who had set the following criteria;

1. A sustained commitment to moral ideals or principles that include a generalised respect for humanity; or a sustained evidence of moral virtue.
2. A disposition to act in accord with one's moral ideals or principles.
3. A willingness to risk one's self-interest for the sake of one's moral values.
4. A tendency to be inspiring to others and thereby to move them to moral action.
5. A sense of realistic humility about one's own importance.<sup>121</sup>

Several conclusions were drawn from studying this group of people. One in particular is of interest to our discussion namely, 80% of those who took part commented that their commitment to their faith was the foundation for their moral action. The researchers point out that this result was quite surprising in the sense that none of the participants were actually selected for their link between religion and morality. Nevertheless this finding did highlight the potential importance of religion to moral growth.

Walker et al. report findings looking at moral dilemmas which suggest a similar link.<sup>122</sup> In this study eighty adults were asked to recall and discuss two real-life moral dilemmas. One of the two examples given had to rank among one of the most difficult decisions they had to make. The study examined the various reasons the participants gave for their reasoning during the decision making process. Walker found that the reliance on and influence of a faith structure was a very significant and recurring factor for the participants. Religion within this context embraced both the structure to approach moral issues as well as a deep commitment to a particular faith. Fernhout's conclusions support Walker's findings when he suggests that for many

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<sup>120</sup> Colby and Damon, 1992.

<sup>121</sup> Colby and Damon, 1992, p. 29.

<sup>122</sup> Walker et al., 1995.

individuals moral rules make more sense within a religious structure.<sup>123</sup> More recent research suggests that the influence of religion on morality might be culturally bound. For example, Shweder et al. concluded that the ethic of autonomy was common in America but not so in India where ethics of community and divinity were much more central to the moral decision making process.<sup>124</sup>

The question could be asked why a faith structure is judged to have a significant effect on the understanding the moral responsibility reasoning of an individual. Four points are worth mentioning in relation to the present discussion. It must be noted that the researcher seeks to underline here how certain aspects of a faith could strengthen formation of moral responsibility, rather than a precise discussion of how these two are interrelated.

First, individuals with a religious commitment are likely to be subjected to regular and often explicit religious teaching about what is right and wrong. Education at home, but also at the place of worship, frequently creates a significant forum to learn and discuss values.<sup>125</sup> Such opportunities enable the individual to gain a better understanding of why certain values are considered to be important. Second, religious teaching on right and wrong often supports or overlaps with moral values held in society at large.<sup>126</sup> Where they differ, the individual is more likely to be taught about them, which consequently helps him to think through or explain his perception on a topic. Third, the skills to formulate moral values are similar to those developed by an individual who endeavours to work out his faith. James Fowler, a colleague of Kohlberg, developed six stages of faith development.<sup>127</sup> He sees faith as a kind of hermeneutical grid through which an individual seeks to work out his faith. Finally, there is the issue of one's perceived place within the world and the responsibility one perceives to have to the community around them. Schweiker comments that personal responsibility should be understood in relation to one's role.<sup>128</sup> For example, a parent is commonly understood to

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<sup>123</sup> Fernhout, 1989.

<sup>124</sup> Shweder et al., 1997.

<sup>125</sup> Husan and O'Brien, 1997.

<sup>126</sup> Attwood, 1988.

<sup>127</sup> Fowler, 1995.

<sup>128</sup> Schweiker, 1999.

have the role to raise, teach and direct their child. A good mother, for instance, is an individual who through her conduct enacts the meaning of that role. The same could be said about a person who considers his role in life to be in relation to the Deity he believes in. One could expect this to increase the individual's sense of emotional commitment to the values of personal moral responsibility since it is strongly connected with accountability to their God.

Given these findings, the present research will explore the link between religion and reasoning about moral responsibility. Having said that, it is recognised that this is done against the background of relatively little work done within this area, particularly among adolescents. The focus in this study is therefore on how the participants explain their moral responsibility in relation to the faith structure they hold. This is examined within the context of moral conflict discussions at home, which means that attention can be given to whether and how religious values are woven into discussions about every day moral responsibility issues. The studies discussed suggest that there is a role between religious conviction and the way people formulate their moral convictions. It is not suggested that one needs to be religious to be moral but that their faith could structure their thinking about moral responsibility. However, it must be noted that the research evidence for this is not overwhelming given the rather limited number of studies. This study wants to explore whatever one can find a link between faith and the manner in which the participants understand moral responsibility. It is hypothesised that the participants with a faith structure will use more explicit religious knowledge to explain their reasons for their moral responsibility and have a higher emotional commitment to it. In line with the research of Modood and Sarwar it is expected that this will be particularly evident among the Asian participants.<sup>129</sup> The participants will be asked about the perceived influence of religion in their day to day living. This information will indicate their level of commitment to their faith and it will be linked to their thoughts about moral responsibility. The researcher suggests that the more conservative

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<sup>129</sup> Responses to the statement 'Religion is very important to how I live my life,' 73% Pakistanis and 76% Bangladeshis agreed while only 13% of the White sample agreed. Modood et al., 1997, p. 308. See also Sarwar, (1994).

participants provide the clearest examples of the link between religious knowledge and explanations for moral responsibility. When comparing Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, Ghuman found Muslims were considered most conservative.<sup>130</sup> Whether the results of the present study are in line with her findings will be examined.

For the researcher the question of method was important in relation to this hypothesis, the key issue being that people can experience their faith commitment on so many different levels. Obviously, such variations could have a significant influence on the overall results. It was therefore decided that the best place to explore this hypothesis was a focused interview. Admittedly, the data gathered is from a smaller sample but the quality is perceived to be easier to evaluate. Also, in the interview setting the researcher is in the position to allow the participants to explore and discuss the matter in their preferred manner, and it is hoped this will draw out nuances which otherwise might be lost in a questionnaire. It is perceived that the researcher's position at the school as a Religious Education teacher, could be seen as a strength since he conducts many faith related discussions during lesson time. This added knowledge places him in a position to probe more purposefully and with more insight.

#### 2.4.5. Research Focus

- *Warton and Goodnow's framework of responsibility is used to examine the nature of moral responsibility in this research.*
- *An instrument called 'Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test' is developed to examine the population's moral responsibility. This is followed by a semi-structured interview exploring the justification of the answers given in the moral responsibility test.*
- *This study uses the word 'integration' to refer to the process of making one's moral responsibility become part of one's identity.*
- *It is understood that cognition and the development thereof, is an essential part of moral development.*

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<sup>130</sup> Ghuman, 1999.

- *The influence of a faith structure on the reasoning of moral responsibility is examined in this study during the focus interview.*
- *Hypotheses:*
  - *Faith structure and emotional commitment to it, help the participant to explain more clearly their reasons for their moral responsibility.*
  - *Among all those who consider themselves committed to a faith, the religiously conservative participants provide the clearest examples of the link between religious knowledge and reasons to explain their moral responsibility.*

## **2.5      *The influence and contribution of the home situation on moral responsibility***

*In this section we aim to examine the role parents play in the adolescent's development of moral responsibility. Different variables such as parental style, family structure and family moral conversations are discussed. Methods to measure these variables are explained.*

It seems that Kohlberg seriously underestimated the specific long-lasting relational ties of affection between parents and their adolescent children. After a brief summary of Kohlberg's understanding of the role of the family in relation to moral development, the three goals of this section will be discussed. First, the work of researchers who have questioned and challenged this position will be examined. This part will include a description of Baumrind's typology for parenting styles. Second, the influence of family structure on the development of moral responsibility will be explored. Third,

attention will be given to research seeking to analyse family moral discussions.

This section of the Literature Review is particularly significant for research questions three and four that focus on the how parents communicate and formulate moral responsibility during a moral conflict situation at home.

#### 2.5.1. Kohlberg's understanding of the role of the family in relation to the moral reasoning development of adolescents

It is suggested that Kohlberg's rather weak emphasis on the role of the family can be explained by his over-reaction to the psychoanalytical fixation on the creation of the moral feelings of shame and guilt, as well as the social learning theorists' over-emphasis on shaped or learnt behaviour.<sup>131</sup> Consequently, Kohlberg argued that the family is but one of the many social institutions which enhances and advances the moral reasoning development of an individual. Although he accepted that negative family circumstances (i.e. abuse, undue punishment, or rejection) can indeed lead to moral arrest, he did not conclude that a positive and wholesome family environment should be considered as an uniquely favouring or greatly encouraging factor of moral development. Talking specifically about the role of the family, Kohlberg commented that the main contribution of the family is the provision of many role-taking opportunities. He states:

"From our point of view. . . 1) Family participation is not unique or critically necessary for moral development, and  
2) The dimensions on which it stimulates moral development are primary general dimensions by which other primary groups stimulate moral development."<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Powers, 1988; Walker, 1996.

<sup>132</sup> Kohlberg, 1969, p. 339.

This is clarified more carefully when he argues:

“There are too many developmental and cultural factors tending to produce ‘normal’ morality to see these attitudes as contingent on special unique relationships to parents . . . role-taking opportunities required for moral development need not be specifically familial nor need they imply identification in any specific sense. Accordingly, our view is that identifications do not cause moral internalisations, but develop in parallel with them, and help to support moral attitudes.”<sup>133</sup>

Judging by his research and publication focus it is obvious that Kohlberg saw the school environment as the predominant and ideal place to influence and encourage moral reasoning development in adolescents. The main reason why schools were singled out as a particularly favourable moral environment is because these are prime places where adolescents enter into dialogue with their friends. Kohlberg argued that these interactions with peers were the single most influential factor in stimulating the growth of moral reasoning.<sup>134</sup> As Walker points out, this argument is founded on the assumption that peers’ social and cognitive-developmental status is much more likely to be at a similar level.<sup>135</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, it is the slight difference in moral reasoning that is considered to create the best climate for optimal disparity.<sup>136</sup>

Although it is generally accepted that the role of peers is very important in the moral development of the adolescent, the question must be raised whether this means that the family influence should be minimised to the extent Kohlberg argues.<sup>137</sup> An overview of literature shows that during the last two decades questions related to this issue have fuelled research projects. Several of these have gained interesting and valuable insights into the effects of family life on the moral development of adolescents. Those researches judged to be significant to the present study will be discussed

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<sup>133</sup> Kohlberg, 1969, p. 428.

<sup>134</sup> Kohlberg, 1969.

<sup>135</sup> Walker, 1996.

<sup>136</sup> Kohlberg, 1976; Berkowitz, 1981; Higgins, 1980; Lockwood, 1978.

<sup>137</sup> Boyes and Allen, 1993; Damon and Hart, 1988; Holstein, 1976; Parikh, 1980; Powers, 1988; Speicher, 1992; Smetana, 1989; Walker and Taylor, 1991; Youniss and Smollar, 1989.



under the following two headings: Relationship between parental stage of moral reasoning development and that of their children, and, parental styles.

### 2.5.2. Relationship between parental stage of moral reasoning development and that of their children

The hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between parental moral development and the moral development of the adolescent could substantially strengthen the argument that parents have a significant influence on their children's moral growth. To investigate the validity of this premise a series of tests were conducted to measure and compare parental and child's levels of moral reasoning.<sup>138</sup> Only a few studies reported statistical support for a convincing link between these two levels. For example, Dunton found correlations between 9-year old girls and their fathers (-.26) and 14-year old boys and their mothers (.22).<sup>139</sup> Another study worth mentioning in this context is the research that was conducted by Speicher.<sup>140</sup> She found that the relationship between parent's and child's levels of moral development becomes more significant when the children reach adulthood. Even though one does not want to nullify this data, it must be noted that placing too much emphasis on these outcomes could be severely misleading. The main reason being, that these results are not representative of the majority of studies measuring levels of moral reasoning development. Generally speaking correlations between moral reasoning development of parents and their children has been found to be weak, inconsistent or even non-existent. Consequently, interpretation is difficult and inconclusive. Walker and Taylor helpfully point out that the real limitation of this research approach is that the researcher essentially measures and compares the parents' and children's levels of moral competence. Therefore, it does not imply that the parents' ability to employ sophisticated moral reasoning demonstrates that their children can actually do the same. Neither can one assume that it will develop in the same way. While discussing the question of this possible link between

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<sup>138</sup> Buck et al., 1981; Dunton, 1989; Holstein, 1973, 1976; Parikh, 1980; Shoffeitt, 1971; Speicher, 1982, 1985; Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>139</sup> Dunton, 1989.

<sup>140</sup> Speicher, 1985, 1992.

parental and children's moral reasoning, Berkowitz suggests that the level of parental moral reasoning is best understood as a 'second variable'.<sup>141</sup> This means that rather than seeing the parental moral reasoning level as predictive of the child's moral level, one should conceive it as predictive of the parents' discipline procedures.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, it must be seen within the complexity of the moral atmosphere that the parents maintain at home by their actions as well as setting an example.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Berkowitz and Grych also comment that moral reasoning has a strong cognitive component, rightly suggesting that this might suggest that the correlation measured in the above studies is mainly an indicator of intelligence rather than a reliable predictor of moral growth.<sup>144</sup>

In the light of these studies it can be concluded that the parental levels of moral reasoning are best understood to be only indirectly related to children's moral development. In fact, it seems that they are best predicted by parental behavioural patterns. In other words, to get a more complete picture of parental influence on moral development, research is likely to come to a fuller understanding when its focus is on parental performance rather than competence. Given the outcome of the studies mentioned the present study will not include a comparison of parental moral stage development with that of their adolescent children. Rather, it is judged more fruitful to explore parental styles of discipline. To examine this further we will now discuss the outcomes of the studies that researched parental discipline styles in relation to the moral development of their children.

### 2.5.3. Parental discipline styles

Within the wider context of moral development research, a limited number of studies have directly examined the relationship between parental discipline styles and the moral reasoning development of children.<sup>145</sup> Hoffman and Saltzstein have described how the various forms of parenting

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<sup>141</sup> Berkowitz and Gibbs, 1985.

<sup>142</sup> Holstein, 1973; Parikh, 1980; Powers, 1988.

<sup>143</sup> Buck et al., 1981; Dobert and Nunner-Winkler, 1985; Hoffman and Saltzstein, 1967; Holstein 1973, Powers, 1988.

<sup>144</sup> Berkowitz and Grych, 1998.

<sup>145</sup> Berkowitz et al. 1995; Boyes and Allen, 1993; Parikh, 1980; Pratt and Diessner, 1994.

styles might influence the children's moral reasoning.<sup>146</sup> By interviewing parents they identified three types of parenting styles. These are love-oriented discipline, power assertive discipline and inductive discipline. The love-oriented parenting style is characterised by the parent withholding affection or approval when the child behaves badly. Research concluded that this form of discipline does not benefit the moral development scores. The parents who disciplined their children by using power-assertive techniques employed many punitive measures to establish and enforce their rules. Children of such families tended to score higher on moral reasoning only when there was a clear threat or sanction. Without this external force they showed little sense of behaving appropriately. Finally, the parents who focused on inductive discipline were characterised by their ability to explain and reason their decisions and points of view in relation to disciplinary matters. Hoffman found that these children were most likely to develop a clear moral sense.<sup>147</sup> His work suggests that there is an important link between giving individuals a rationale for discipline measures, and moral behaviour and judgements. Baumrind, who constructed the typology for parenting styles, conducted further work in this area. For the present research her work is selected rather than that of Hoffman. Two reasons form the basis for this decision. First of all, more research projects have been published in response to Baumrind's conclusions on parental style. This benefits the present study since there is more material to compare findings and discuss the outcome. Second, Baumrind's work has more directly linked research among adolescents, which is a key variable in this study. A good example of this is Smetana's work when she looks quite extensively at this whole area of parental style and deviance during adolescents.<sup>148</sup> In order to provide a knowledgeable basis for this discussion, this section will continue to outline in more detail Baumrind's typology for parenting and explain how data for this variable is collected in this study.

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<sup>146</sup> Hoffman and Saltzstein, 1967.

<sup>147</sup> Hoffman, 1987.

<sup>148</sup> For example, Smetana, 1995b.

#### 2.5.3.1. Baumrind's typology for parenting styles

As a framework for different styles of parental authority Baumrind's widely accepted typology for parental styles is used.<sup>149</sup> She argues that parenting varies along two dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness. When these are crossed one has four possible parenting styles which she defines as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting.<sup>150</sup> Each will be described briefly.<sup>151</sup>

Authoritative parents are considered to be both responsive and demanding. They encourage their children to become autonomous as they grow older. Their strength is to monitor and communicate to their children clear standards of conduct. When it comes to discipline, they seek to be as supportive and assertive as possible within the context of their child's ability. Authoritative parents are characterised as assertive, but not intrusive or unduly restrictive. In short, authoritative parents aim to ensure their children are assertive, capable of bearing responsibility, self-regulated and co-operative.

Authoritarian parents are demanding and directive but not responsive. Such parents regard obedience as a virtue and hence consider punitive responses appropriate. Authoritarian parents do not consider it to be of great importance that the child is provided with explanations for their demands and rules. They seek to create an environment for their children which is orderly and has clear rules. Authoritarian parents expect their children to obey at all times and place less emphasis on developing their own sense of responsibility. All the activities of the child are monitored as closely as possible.

Permissive parents are responsive but not demanding. They are warm and allow their children considerable self-regulation of activities. Permissive parents are also characterised by few maturity demands; they don't insist that

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<sup>149</sup> Baumrind, 1971; 1988; 1991a; 1991b; 1991c.

<sup>150</sup> For an in depth discussion of the typology of parenting styles see Baumrind, 1971, 1978.

<sup>151</sup> Most of the data compiled by Baumrind flows from her observations and findings gathered at the Family Socialisation and Developmental Competence Project (FSP). The researchers who collected the information were trained thoroughly. They were also required to observe the adolescent and parent participants for a minimum of 20 or 30 hours respectively before completing a comprehensive set of ratings.

their children follow parental defined standards. Permissive parents seek to avoid confrontation.

Finally, rejecting-neglecting parents are neither demanding nor responsive and therefore are considered to create the worst family environment for the child. Such parents are highly coercive, but do not monitor their children's behaviour. They neglect the child-rearing responsibilities altogether. Glasgow et al. commented that this type of parents is not found in some groups within society.<sup>152</sup> Researches examining morality in relation to moral growth, often do not include this style of parenting, mainly because it is often considered too small a sample in the research population. On these grounds the present study will exclude it as well. Added to this there are also practical reasons and a potential clash of interests specific to this research situation. Since the researcher is also the teacher of the participants he has a legal duty to report family neglect issues when observed or disclosed by students. In other words, it would put the researcher in a difficult position to conduct, for example, the interview knowing he had to pass this information on to social services. It was therefore decided to exclude the students who were known by the school to encounter such lack of parental support at home.

Summarising the results of various studies<sup>153</sup> which examine the effects of the four parental styles, Baumrind found that children of authoritative parents are consistently more 'instrumentally competent-agentic, communal, and cognitively competent than other children'.<sup>154</sup> While studying young middle-class families, Baumrind concluded that an authoritarian upbringing was more harmful to boys than to girls.<sup>155</sup> Pre-school white children were considered to be more negatively affected by authoritarian parenting than black girls.<sup>156</sup> In a study on the influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance abuse, Baumrind found that particularly those parents who were 'highly demanding and highly responsive',

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<sup>152</sup> Glasgow et al., 1997.

<sup>153</sup> Baumrind, 1987; Clark, 1983; Dornbush et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1992.

<sup>154</sup> Baumrind, 1991c.

<sup>155</sup> Baumrind, 1971; 1987.

<sup>156</sup> Baumrind, 1973. Dornbush et al., (1987) also looked at the effect of authoritarian parenting and concluded that white boys were more negatively affected than Hispanic boys.

i.e. authoritative, proved to be remarkably successful in protecting their adolescents from drug abuse and in generating competence.<sup>157</sup>

The above examples indicate that the current research advocates the authoritative parent to be the best equipped caregiver to create the most beneficial home environment for children of all ages. For a closer look at the effects of authoritative parenting on moral responsibility two specific studies are important.<sup>158</sup> These are Parikh's study, conducted among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and their families<sup>159</sup>, and Boyes and Allen's study that looks at styles of parent-child interaction and moral reasoning in adolescents.<sup>160</sup>

Parikh found that parents who have a higher level of moral reasoning tend to use more induction and other authoritative parenting elements.<sup>161</sup> The moral development of the adolescent children was affected by the extent to which the parents were able to elicit and consider the child's point of view. It was also observed that availability of moral ideas was not sufficient for moral growth. Active sharing of these moral ideas within an encouraging environment greatly enhanced the development of a child's moral judgement. Parikh found that there is a stronger correlation between mother and child moral stage development than between father and child.<sup>162</sup>

Boyes and Allen reported higher levels of moral reasoning in college and university students with authoritative parents and lower levels with authoritarian parents.<sup>163</sup> They hypothesised that authoritative parents facilitate the best family environment for moral reasoning growth. Boyes and Allen concluded that Baumrind's parenting styles more clearly predicted the respondents' relative level of principled moral reasoning than any one of the

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<sup>157</sup> Baumrind, 1991b, p. 56.

<sup>158</sup> It must be noted that the studies referred to are the only specific studies that directly linked parental style with moral reasoning development. Other studies have examined component variables that comprise distinct parenting styles. For clarity's sake these studies are not discussed at this point in this study.

<sup>159</sup> Parikh, 1980. He researched the development of the moral judgement and its relation to family environmental factors in Indian and American families.

<sup>160</sup> Boyes and Allan, 1993.

<sup>161</sup> Parikh, 1980. Out of a sample of fifteen hundred eighth- and tenth-grade students forty families were selected to take part in this study. From each family three members were included in the study; father, mother, and a child.

<sup>162</sup> Parikh suggests this is due to the fact that mothers spend more time with their children and therefore understand them better. Consequently the mothers' use of induction is more advanced.

<sup>163</sup> Boyes and Allen, 1993. Using Baumrind's (1971) description of parental authority they assessed parenting styles. Boyes and Allen interviewed 117 students from high schools and universities.

three dimensions of parenting behaviour identified by the CRPBI'.<sup>164</sup> Using a different method, Pratt and Diessner reported that adolescent moral reasoning development is predicted positively by authoritative parenting style and negatively by permissive parenting style.<sup>165</sup>

In the light of the studies mentioned above it seems that, in line with Baumrind's related findings, the most nurturing family environment for moral reasoning development is the parenting style provided by the authoritative parent. In regard to the present study the parenting styles provide the researcher with a helpful framework within which to pose a key research question. The word "framework" must be underlined at this point. This study does not seek to challenge or evaluate certain aspects of Baumrind's typology for parenting styles. It rather aims to further one's understanding of adolescents understanding of moral responsibility. In doing so the research will be guided by the grouping of the participants to the closest match of parenting style at home.

A few words regarding the method of gathering the data about the parental styles is important. The handbooks produced by Baumrind to establish the exact type of parental authority are very detailed and it takes extensive study and time to administer this instrument. It also requires a certain level of accessibility. One either needs access to the home or other situations where parents can be seen 'in action'. Given the physical context of this study, as well as ethical consideration, such observation would be difficult. Therefore, with the broader aims of the study in mind, the researcher has chosen to make use of Buri's questionnaire, which is in line with Baumrind's conclusions and that categorises parental styles.<sup>166</sup> The scores are derived from the appraisals of a son or a daughter. Evidence for the validity and reliability of Buri's questionnaire is discussed in the following chapter. Later in the research, during the interview with selected participants, they were questioned again about their perception of parental style. This is matched with other information gathered by the interviewer. The outcome of

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<sup>164</sup> Boyes and Allen, 1993. CRPBI stands for 'Children's Report of Parental Behaviour Inventory', constructed by Schludermann and Schludermann, 1970, 1971, 1983.

<sup>165</sup> Pratt and Diessner, 1994.

<sup>166</sup> Buri, 1991.

these various 'measuring points' together creates the parental style as described in this research. Although, it is clear at the outset that this method is not as thorough as the one Baumrind advocates, Buri's questionnaire is expected to provide sufficiently reliable data to categorise the participants according to parental style at home.

The above discussion shows that the authoritative parenting style is understood to create the best environment for an individual to develop generally but also enhances growth of moral responsibility. In line with these findings the researcher therefore hypothesises that those participants who perceive their parents to be authoritative will also record the highest levels of moral responsibility scores in the DAMRT. With regard to the other two parenting styles, permissive parents are seen as having a broader range of positive or negative effects. The research therefore hypothesises that participants will also highlight this in the DAMRT with those of permissive parents showing a broader range of levels than the other two parenting styles.

#### 2.5.4. The influence of family structure on moral responsibility

Broken families such as divorced families, stepfamilies, and 'blended families' are a common feature of British society. In fact the UK, with the highest rate of separation and divorce in Western Europe, is now considered to be its divorce capital.<sup>167</sup> One in four children have parents who get divorced.<sup>168</sup> All those who write, discuss, or study the effects of divorce, agree that the erosion of such a fundamental relationship could generate enormous stress for the families involved and those around them. These sort of statistics and research data underline how important it is to seek to understand the impact of change in family structure.

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<sup>167</sup> Close to half of all marriages now end in divorce. Source: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/talking\\_cure/zdivorce.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/talking_cure/zdivorce.shtml)

<sup>168</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999.



One of the aims of this study is to examine whether family structure<sup>169</sup> has an impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility. However, despite the predominance of divorce in today's society there are currently surprisingly few studies comparing the effects of family structural change with that of moral responsibility. Almost all studies drew their participants from intact families. Only one study was found that seeks to explore the 'moral and spiritual lives of children of divorce'.<sup>170</sup> However, this two-year project started in January 2001 and as such has not released its findings yet. Also, it must be noted that despite the cultural difference (USA rather than UK based) the target group consists of only adults (no adolescents as in the present research) who grew up in a divorced family.<sup>171</sup> Justification for the research is interesting in the sense that it touches on one of the central issues related to the present study. Marquardt, the project manager, states that 'the experience of children of divorce is often quite different from that of children in intact families'.<sup>172</sup> The central question seems to be what the effect of the 'quite different' experience actually means in terms of moral growth. In other words, the validity of the present research question is essentially related to the question whether it is likely that the adolescent of a 'broken' family experiences life in such a distinct way that their moral development is measurably influenced. It is beyond the boundaries of this study to review all the literature on divorce. In order to address the question, attention must be given to several key studies in relations to family structure but outside the realm of moral responsibility.

At the outset it is important to highlight that most research indicates that the experience of divorce is different for younger children than for adolescents.<sup>173</sup> The reason for this is not so much related to the cognitive capacity of the latter, for example the increased ability to make sense of what

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<sup>169</sup> In this context family structure refers to 'in tact' and 'broken' families. 'In tact' meaning the adolescent lives with biological parents. 'Broken' means the adolescent comes from a single parent family or grows up in a family with a stepparent. In this research the category 'Broken' is subdivided into 'mum only', 'dad only', 'mum and step dad' and finally 'dad and step mum'.

<sup>170</sup> Institute for American Values, New York.

<sup>171</sup> In the first phase 60 qualitative interviews will be conducted with adults of divorced and in tact families. The second phase constitutes of a representative survey of 1,000 people.

<sup>172</sup> [http://www.americanvalues.org/html/children\\_of\\_divorce.shtml](http://www.americanvalues.org/html/children_of_divorce.shtml)

<sup>173</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999, p.88.

has happened, but it is more connected to the emotional maturity of the adolescent. Couple this with the individual identity questions and it makes the experience of an adolescent unique. In fact, several studies found that participants who were pre-adolescent at the time of divorce, experienced difficulties during adolescence, which were not apparent during childhood.<sup>174</sup> Hetherington found that adolescents of 'broken' families were more likely to avoid communication with their parents.<sup>175</sup> An important conclusion one can draw from this is that the challenges and difficulties related to divorce must be viewed as a process rather than an event.<sup>176</sup>

Several studies have examined the long-term effects on children of divorced families. Rodgers and Pryor looked at many of these and emphasise the significant number of studies listing the negative effects of divorce.<sup>177</sup> For example, studies found that children of divorced families have higher rates of delinquency<sup>178</sup>, experience more health problems (both mental and physical)<sup>179</sup>, lower education attainment<sup>180</sup>, higher suicide rates<sup>181</sup>, and higher drug and alcohol abuse<sup>182</sup>. However, it must be pointed out that there are some shortcomings regarding the methodologies used in these studies. A full examination of this research material underlines the fact that many questions are still unanswered and, therefore, there is a lack of conclusive material to set a clear context for our present study. This point is illustrated by, for example, the level of economic life of a family. It is commonly accepted that intact families are, on average, better off than single-parent families.<sup>183</sup> It is perceivable that this variable could have a significant effect on the well being of the child and overshadow the effects of the family structure of the

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<sup>174</sup> Hetherington, 1993; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1990.

<sup>175</sup> Hetherington, 1993.

<sup>176</sup> This is particularly well illustrated by the research conducted by Buchanan et al. (1996) who examined 1,500 children and adolescents over a period of six years.

<sup>177</sup> Rodgers and Pryor, 1998.

<sup>178</sup> Wadsworth, 1979.

<sup>179</sup> Garnefski and Diekstra, 1997; Richmond, 1988; Rodgers et al., 1997.

<sup>180</sup> Kierman, 1997.

<sup>181</sup> Berman and Jobes, 1995; Diekstra et al., 1995.

<sup>182</sup> Hope et al., 1998.

<sup>183</sup> Scott, 1993. The specific economic difficulties for single-parent households were also highlighted in a recent study conducted by Gingerbread (Family Welfare Association) and British Gas. <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk>

single parent household.<sup>184</sup> This argument is strengthened by the consistent findings that reports of children in single fathers' families show greater satisfaction with parenting and fewer behaviour problems.<sup>185</sup> Such an outcome is not unexpected since single fathers are often in a better economical position. However, Greif found that this self-reported quality of single fathers does deteriorate during adolescence.<sup>186</sup> But it is reasonable to question whether this finding is related specifically to the single parent factor or whether it measures common tension in families which often peaks during adolescent years.<sup>187</sup> In sum, other significant variables, such as poverty and economic disadvantages, related to single parenting were not accounted for. These research projects are therefore limited in their inability to single out the precise factors directly related to the experience of divorce.

To gain a more complete picture it is paramount to compare this literature with research that does not describe divorce as an exclusively negative experience. For instance, studies found that some adolescents, who had endured a long and painful parental conflict, recorded the experience of divorce as a welcome relief.<sup>188</sup> Barber and Eccles even suggested that divorce could have a positive effect on adolescents.<sup>189</sup> They refer to the added responsibilities and greater sense of autonomy an adolescent might experience as a direct result of divorce. On the other hand there is the link between increased responsibility and control in single parent families.<sup>190</sup> Due to the lack of a second parent, conflicts in single-parent families could arguably be more pronounced depending on the place of the child within the family and his or her level of responsibilities.<sup>191</sup>

These studies also indicate that future research must take into account that short and long-term consequences of divorce vary considerably. Coleman and Henry share this viewpoint and stress that well-designed longitudinal studies may provide a fuller understanding of the long-term

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<sup>184</sup> Amato and Keith, 1991.

<sup>185</sup> Amato and Keith, 1991. Greif, 1985. Hanson, 1985.

<sup>186</sup> Greif, 1985, DeMaris and Grief, 1992.

<sup>187</sup> Furman and Buhrmester, 1992.

<sup>188</sup> McLoughlin and Whitfield, 1984; Mitchell, 1985.

<sup>189</sup> Barber and Eccles, 1992.

<sup>190</sup> Hanson, 1988, Hetherington, and Clingempeel, 1992.

<sup>191</sup> Cohen, 1994. Parish, 1990.

effects of divorce. Furthermore, they suggest that it may also lead to a less pessimistic picture which, hitherto, is painted by some research projects.<sup>192</sup> Within this context another factor is important to consider, namely the role and influence of stepparents (and possibly their children). Thus far, research seems to suggest that boys find it harder to adjust than girls do.<sup>193</sup> But it must be noted that not all studies report such clear differences. Rodgers and Pryor suggest that one reason for these variations is that males and females manifest their discomfort and/or distress in different ways.<sup>194</sup> For example, boys might become particularly overt and act-out more, while girls might become withdrawn or manifest their stress in a more subtle and outwardly less attention-seeking manner.

How does this information relate to the present study? The three main research questions relating to this discussion are research question one, three and four. In order to address these questions successfully, a couple of points must be taken into account. First, it is essential to appreciate that other variables, such as poverty, racism and disabilities that parents or adolescents suffer from, might play a significant role in deciding whether the moral development of an individual is hindered. Second, gender can play a significant role. Third, family arrangements that follow the family break up are understood to have a strong influence. Fourth, the timing of the participant completing the questionnaires / interviews and the actual point of the divorce can substantially 'colour' the responses of the adolescent and therefore his moral growth.

It would go beyond the boundaries of this research to fully explore all these influences, their inter-relatedness, and impact on the development of moral responsibility within the context of the parental discussions. Having said that, the above material does provide relevant information regarding the validity of exploring the link between broken families<sup>195</sup> and the understanding of moral responsibility. Despite the fact that not a single study directly

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<sup>192</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999. In this context some psychologists (for example, Mahony) refer to studies conducted by Wallerstein who draws her conclusions about the long-term effects of divorce from a sample with a rather high proportion of dysfunctional families.

<sup>193</sup> Ferri, 1984; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington and Clingempeel, 1992.

<sup>194</sup> Rodgers and Pryor, 1998.

<sup>195</sup> This term is used to categorise blended and single parent families together.

comments on this issue, it is reasonable to suggest that, for example, divorce can have a unique and dramatic impact on the adolescent's experience of life and his or her response to it. Given the many and complex factors playing a part in this process, one cannot assume that broken families are either 'good' or 'bad' for the development of moral responsibility. However, one can hypothesise that adolescents of broken families will record a broader range of levels of moral responsibility than those participants of intact families. Underlining this is the understanding that in certain situations a broken family can create a much better environment for moral growth, whereas in other situations it could lead to the exact opposite. For example, double standards and manipulative behaviour between parents can potentially be much less favourable than a one-parent home with one set of rules. Taking this point further, it seems reasonable to suggest that the key to a positive environment for moral growth is the parent's ability to cope with the structural changes in the family. For instance, clear discussions regarding decisions and consequences are understood to be helpful, whereas sudden unexpected changes with no room for discussion could be detrimental. Such skills are reflected more in the various parental styles rather than the actual type of family structure. Within the context of this research it is therefore hypothesised that of the two variables the parental style is a better indicator of moral responsibility levels than family structure.

Given the complexity regarding the relationship between divorce and the development of the child, one is not surprised that there is a lack of studies comparing moral responsibility levels with family structure. In that sense, the researcher cannot draw on specific data generated in other studies. However, the above discussion clearly highlights that there are many factors that potentially play a significant part in whether the broken family is a more positive environment for the child. Given this knowledge, the researcher hypothesises that the results generated by the DAMRT will show a broader range within the 'broken' family variable than the 'intact' family.

### 2.5.5. Method used for in-depth examination of conflict discussion at home

Besides the parental style there is also another research angle on examining the effects of family communication in comparison with that of moral development. This centres on the question of whether communication between parent and adolescent either enhances or hinders the development of moral responsibility. The present researcher sees this to be an important issue. The reason being that it not only is closest to what actually happens in real life, but it also renders information specific to how communication on moral topics varies between individual families. In this part of the discussion the researcher wants to look at an instrument specifically developed to examine the nature of family communications.<sup>196</sup>

Studies about family communication can be ordered into two groups namely, 'Research based on intervention' and 'Research analysing family transactive discussion.' Due to the nature of the present study it is specifically the second approach that is of interest to this research.<sup>197</sup> The transactive discussion method originally has its roots in studies examining adolescent peer relationships and their moral dilemma discussions.<sup>198</sup> This type of research defines speech acts in which the speaker re-presents (for example paraphrases) or actively comments, analyses, or gives critique on the reasoning of a co-discussant.

Powers conducted a notable study for which she extended the transactive discussion measuring instruments.<sup>199</sup> Powers hypothesised that certain qualities of a family are stimulating or inhibiting adolescent's moral

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<sup>196</sup> Researches have used both real and hypothetical dilemmas as a basis for these studies.

<sup>197</sup> Studies based on interviews use family discussions as interventions intended to stimulate a child's moral reasoning. Grimes (reviewed by Higgings, 1980) found significantly greater moral reasoning development when mothers were included in moral discussion with their children than in a traditional classroom moral discussion intervention. Stanley (1980) noted that the only successful parent training group was composed of parents with their adolescent children. Furthermore, only those parents showed a parallel decrease in authoritarian decision-making in family discussions. Since this study does not make use of an intervention based research programme, this method will not be discussed in more detail.

<sup>198</sup> Berkowitz, 1981; Berkowitz and Gibbs, 1983, 1985; Berkowitz, Gibbs, and Broughton, 1980; Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975; Higgings, 1980.

<sup>199</sup> Powers, 1982, 1988.

reasoning development.<sup>200</sup> Central to her argument was the understanding that a family environment facilitates cognitive processes that are significantly different from school. She argues that this is implicated by the nature of family relationships, which is more permanent and generally speaking more complex. Powers states that the 'history of social relationships within a family and the affective nature of these relationships require that a broader range of social interaction variables be considered as possible stimulants or inhibitors of role-taking and cognitive conflict.'<sup>201</sup> Based on this assumption, she went on to explore whether the family in any unique way contributes to the moral reasoning development of the children. Her particular research focus was the discussions between parents and their children. Her participants were psychiatrically hospitalised and non-patient adolescents.

Powers developed an instrument called Developmental Environment Coding System (DECS). The DECS is characterised by the fact that every speech in the discussion is carefully coded. Besides the cognitive stimulating speeches, it also includes cognitive interfering ones, as well as the speeches that are effectively stimulating or interfering. Consequently, the DECS is an instrument that can make a clear distinction between a constructive and destructive conflict.<sup>202</sup>

Powers observed the moral discussions of adolescents and their parents. She used hypothetical dilemmas as the basis for these discussions. These discussions became the basis from which she examined the relationship between the parents' discussion style and the adolescents' level of moral reasoning. Powers found that there was a positive relationship between parental support and the adolescents' development of moral reasoning. However, she did not observe a relationship between parental cognitive stimulating behaviours and adolescent's development of moral reasoning.

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<sup>200</sup> This hypothesis is supported by other studies, notably that of Alexandes (1973) who compared defensive and destructive communications in abnormal families with supportive and constructive communications in normal families.

<sup>201</sup> Powers, 1988, p. 211.

<sup>202</sup> One of the major strengths of Powers' study is the development of the DECS that continues to be recognised as a reliable and valid instrument to code discussions.

Therefore the hypothesis that the parents' influence should be considered to be unique needs more research evidence and clearer definition. Nevertheless, her research is often referred to as an important milestone restating the importance of family communication in the moral development of adolescents. It also has generated many questions that have become the basis for further research. Powers concludes her discussion by posing the question whether it is possible to formulate the characteristics of the most favourable family environment for moral judgement development. Illustrating the complexity of this quest, Powers points out that cognitive developmental theorists have given sufficient attention to the possibility that the same environment might be understood differently by different individuals. She extends this observation to the issue of the moral development needs of each individual. Powers concludes her research by commenting that, 'there has been no examination of how the family must change and shape its behaviour to match a child's particular level of development.'<sup>203</sup>

#### 2.5.6. Research conducted in response to Powers' study

As pointed out, Powers' study has generated some important questions that subsequently have been examined by others. One key query is a question related to the method employed, namely how can one best analyse the family discussions.

During the 1980's, several studies were conducted to examine this process of level related exposure to moral issues. The settings for these studies were all in schools. A recurring observation was that teachers had significant problems producing appropriate challenging comments slightly above the adolescents' level of moral competence. This lack of the right level of cognitive disequilibrium is, of course, not the ideal climate for growth according to Kohlberg's theory of moral development.<sup>204</sup> The question relevant to this study is whether one finds similar results in the home setting. However, the understanding of (conflict) moral reasoning in the home

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<sup>203</sup> Powers, 1988, p. 217.

<sup>204</sup> Kohlberg, 1980.



environment is still rather limited, due the small number of studies that have been carried out. Part of the reason for this is the fact that observing parent-child interaction at home is far more complicated than observing teacher-child interaction in the classroom. Closest to a 'home moral discussion' is the study conducted by Walker and Taylor.

Addressing the issue of family interactions and development of moral reasoning, Walker and Taylor examined moral discussions of eighty family triads (father, mother, and child).<sup>205</sup> The research consisted of 3 phases. First, each participant took part in an individual MJJ interview. Second, the family discussed together a hypothetical dilemma. Finally, the family discussed a self-generated (or real-life) moral dilemma from the child's own experience. This entire procedure was repeated 2 years later to measure the child's possible moral reasoning development. Walker and Taylor made several interesting observations, two of which are noteworthy with regard to the present discussion. First, they found that parents accommodate to the child's level of moral reasoning. Walker and Taylor observed that parents used lower levels of moral reasoning when talking to their children than what they had shown to be capable of in the moral reasoning competence test. Although parents adjusted to low-stage children more than to high-stage children it was nevertheless concluded that greater disparities were found for low- than high-stage children. Second, Walker and Taylor found that the self-generated dilemmas rather than the hypothetical dilemmas predict more accurately children's moral reasoning. For example, they observed that parents, while discussing self-generated dilemmas, were usually less operational but more representational and supportive. Walker and Taylor concluded their study by pointing out that their research was one of an exploratory nature and therefore left much scope for further investigation. However, this study is significant since it highlights two key issues. The first is related to the value of the DECS and the second is related to the value of self-generated moral dilemmas. The DECS instrument successfully enabled Walker to accumulate information about the transactive discussion techniques. Although the DECS is perhaps not widely used in studies (partly

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<sup>205</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991.

due to the fact it is time consuming to learn to use it and code the data), it nevertheless can be judged to be a thorough instrument for analysing family conflict discussions. Second, this study concludes that self-generated dilemmas are preferred above hypothetical dilemmas. This latter point needs some more exploration since it does not follow the tradition of hypothetical dilemmas. The next section will look at this debate in the context of the development of the theory of moral reasoning.

### 2.5.7. Discussion material for DECS

In earlier studies self-reported questionnaires were used to measure moral growth. The main reason these were not considered to be a success was predominantly related to the fact that questions about reliability and validity were never answered satisfactorily. Besides that, it proved rather complicated to group and compare generated data.

To measure moral reasoning, Kohlberg developed an instrument called Moral Judgement Interview (MJl). The MJl is either an oral (recorded) or written assessment. During the test the participants are presented with usually three hypothetical dilemmas.<sup>206</sup> These cover issues such as punishment, property, roles and concerns of affection, life (preservation, quality/quantity), law, liberty, distributive justice, sex, truth, and authority.<sup>207</sup> After hearing the story the participants are asked to answer a series of questions which aim to uncover the moral reasoning of the individual. It must be noted that the main focus of these questions is to understand the 'why' and 'how' of the decision-making process rather than the actual outcome of the actual decision.<sup>208</sup>

Subsequent research has raised various significant questions in regard to this approach developed by Kohlberg. For example, Baumrind has

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<sup>206</sup> One of the better known examples of the MJl is about an individual called Heinz. His wife is dying of a rare form of cancer. After trying everything to help find a cure for his wife he hears about a new type of medicine. He does everything within his means to raise enough money for the overpriced medicine but sadly has to conclude that he hasn't enough. In a last attempt to save his wife's life he considers stealing medicine.

<sup>207</sup> Kohlberg, 1975.

<sup>208</sup> For example, Kohlberg argued that stealing the medicine for selfish reasons should score low, while stealing in order to preserve a human life must score high.

criticised Kohlberg for his exclusive reliance on the MJT.<sup>209</sup> Others have highlighted the perceived weakness by questioning the validity of the test.<sup>210</sup> Their main criticism is that the moral dilemmas are often too far removed from the actual life experiences of the participants. In response to this, so called 'real-life dilemmas' were chosen to measure moral development. There are good reasons for studying patterns of "everyday" moral judgements within this context. An important advantage is that it enables the researcher to examine much more directly the social and cultural context in which moral thought is rooted. Also, studies with real-life moral dilemmas explore actual moral decision-making processes in the specific life situation of the individual. This, in turn, generates a better understanding of hypothetical moral reasoning in relation to moral action.

To illustrate this point some of Gilligan and Bekeley's findings are noteworthy.<sup>211</sup> They observed that over 40% of their participants had higher moral reasoning scores in real-life dilemmas than in the hypothetical dilemmas (vs. 15% - 22% lower). Gilligan and Bekeley point out that displaced communication patterns in the test are arguably not a fair representation of the way the individual deals with actual moral dilemmas of everyday life. They conclude that the hypothetical dilemmas insufficiently capture the highest level of moral reasoning competence. Gilligan argues that this higher percentage is particularly evident among women who tend to make care-orientated judgements. Other studies have highlighted that "real life" moral situations often cause participants to score significantly lower. Milgram records a famous example of this in his behavioural study of obedience.<sup>212</sup> Participants were asked in a hypothetical situation to choose between harming an innocent stranger or disobeying a figure in authority. The majority chose the latter. However, when the participants were actually faced with this dilemma in real life 65% chose to harm the stranger. Furthermore, the reasons provided by the participants to justify their actions were equivalent to Stage One reasoning in Kohlberg's model, an unlikely outcome if they were

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<sup>209</sup> Baumrind, 1978, 1986.

<sup>210</sup> Gilligan and Bekeley, 1980; Haan, 1975; Walker and Taylor, 1991; Yussen, 1977.

<sup>211</sup> Gilligan and Bekeley, 1980.

<sup>212</sup> Milgram, 1963.

given the hypothetical dilemma test! More recent studies show that despite people's acknowledgement of wrongfulness this does not stop them from wrongdoing.<sup>213</sup> Carpendale and Krebs concluded that financial incentive affected people's moral choices.<sup>214</sup> In this respect Walker argues that Kohlberg's stage theory has a self-limiting score.<sup>215</sup> He suggests that the hypothetical dilemmas deal with adequacy of a particular justification for a moral solution rather than directly interacting with moral emotion and behaviour generated by the moral dilemma.

For the sake of clarity it is important to stress that the term 'real-life dilemmas' can be somewhat misleading.<sup>216</sup> In their study the dilemmas termed 'real-life' were only real life experiences in the sense that they had happened to someone else and subsequently were recorded. It is important to underline, therefore, that the participants did not, as such, 'live through' these dilemmas themselves. This is noteworthy because although the latter dilemmas could be considered a major improvement from the MJJ, there is no guarantee that the tests, as such, are in line with actual life experiences of the participants. In other words, such 'real-life dilemmas' could, admittedly to a lesser extent, be criticised on similar grounds as the MJJ.

Nevertheless the main point of the studies referred to above is that understanding of morality needs to be examined not just by the method of hypothetical dilemmas. Within this debate of real life- versus hypothetical dilemmas, Walker et al. comment that actually 'relatively little is known about the kinds of moral problems and issues that people confront in everyday living'.<sup>217</sup> Wark and Krebs support this by pointing out that of the large number of studies on moral judgement only relatively few have focused on the important and socially relevant question as to how individuals make moral decisions in everyday life.<sup>218</sup> Krebs et al., examining this issue further, found that there is a distinction between a third person perspective (hypothetical

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<sup>213</sup> Denton and Krebs (1990) found that people would drink and drive even though they say it is wrong.

<sup>214</sup> Carpendale and Krebs, 1995.

<sup>215</sup> Walker, 1984.

<sup>216</sup> See for example, Gilligan and Bekeley, 1980.

<sup>217</sup> Walker et al., 1987, p. 843.

<sup>218</sup> Wark and Krebs, 1996.

dilemma) and a first person perspective (real life situation).<sup>219</sup> In other words, asking "What should I do?" or "What should one do?" can render two very different answers. As Haviv and Leman point out, reasoning in real-life situations involves decisions that are more practical, self-serving and less rational.<sup>220</sup> Individuals are also often more aware of the direct consequences of the moral decision. Krebs et al. found that participants believed Heinz should steal the drug<sup>221</sup> yet argued they themselves would not steal it because of the possible negative consequences of their decision.<sup>222</sup> The value of this observation is supported by recent work, published by Haviv and Leman, who examined factors in moral decision making in real life.<sup>223</sup> They found that consideration of the consequences of individual actions proved paramount within the decision making process. Furthermore, such consideration was most influential when the participant reasoned about their own response to antisocial dilemmas (having done or doing something wrong). This finding is in line with Walker's perception that real-life moral dilemmas connect more directly with the emotional roots the form of which have an important influence on the development of the moral decision.<sup>224</sup>

All these arguments, including Walker's research discussed in the pervious section, have supported the present researcher in his decision to use real-life (or self-generated) moral dilemmas as the starting point to examine moral communication at home. During the final interview, participants are asked to explore two types of moral communication, namely moral discussion and moral conflict discussion. This is understood to be important since ethnicity possibly has an influence on how conflicts are communicated. Sole concentration on conflict situations might therefore distort the total picture of family moral communication.

The reader must be reminded that all the data for this research is gathered through, as it were, the eyes of the adolescent. This means that the moral discussion or conflict is analysed in a different way from Powers' initial

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<sup>219</sup> Krebs et al., 1997.

<sup>220</sup> Haviv and Leman, 2002.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Kohlberg, 1984, p. 640.

<sup>222</sup> Krebs et al., 1994.

<sup>223</sup> Haviv and Leman, 2002.

<sup>224</sup> Walker, 1984.

research project. Whereas she coded responses of parents directly, this study does this on the basis of the adolescent's perceptions. This study explores whether similar levels of speech patterns can still be measured given this way of data gathering.

### 2.5.8. Silent moral argument

Powers' study has also helped to ask questions about the frequency of moral communications at home. Does it actually take place at all? And if not, are there particular moral dilemmas an adolescent prefers not to discuss with his parents? In this section the question is posed whether one can find sufficient support to establish that a significant number of the potential moral discussions do not take place between parent and adolescent. In other words, is there evidence to suggest that the adolescent avoids discussing certain moral issues with his parents? This is followed by possible suggestions for why moral conflict discussions do not take place. In conclusion, it is explained how this study seeks to access such 'silent' discussions in the family home.

A number of studies, the majority done in the USA, show that the transformation from childhood to adolescence is normally marked by minor but persistent conflicts about everyday details of family life.<sup>225</sup> By means of illustration the following overview is judged to be helpful:<sup>226</sup>

Type			
Doing chores	20%	Appearance	8%
Interpersonal relationships	16%	Personality characteristics	8%
Regulating activities	14%	Regulating relationships	7%
Homework	10%	Money	5%
Bedtime & curfew	8%	Health & hygiene	3%

*Table 1: Conflict situations at home*

<sup>225</sup> Hill and Holmbeck, 1987; Montemayor and Hanson, 1985; Steinberg, 1981.

<sup>226</sup> Source: Smetana, Yau, Restropo, and Braeges, 1991.

These findings showed no significant change for intact or divorced families with early or middle adolescents.<sup>227</sup> However, it is noted that the above conflict issues are predominantly 'personal' or 'conventional' but seldom 'moral'.<sup>228</sup> Smetana observed that conflict situations are seldom related to topics such as religion, politics, sex, and drugs. Smetana argues that this reflects the members' reluctance to discuss these issues since they are perceived to be too sensitive.<sup>229</sup> This is an interesting observation but one wonders if that situation changes when society itself relates to these issues more openly and discussing it more freely. However, that discussions related to personal and conventional issues are more common than moral discussions should not come as a surprise. Adolescent life simply does not consist of big moral questions alone. Much of the time is taken up by normal day to day jobs, which in a family setting can easily become the focus of disagreement. An explanation of Smetana's observation that families might be reluctant to discuss moral issues could be linked to the complexity of many of these moral issues.

From a totally different research area, i.e. youth-culture, another possible answer for lack of moral communication is presented. Many sociologists and media commentators regard youth culture as reflecting and expressing the experience, activities and values of young people.<sup>230</sup> The phenomenon of youth culture, they conclude, implies that 'the young are socialised into and committed to a special set of values, standards, expectations and behaviour patterns distinguishable from those of adult society'.<sup>231</sup> Characteristic of youth culture is that as generational divisions

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<sup>227</sup> Montemayer (1983) observed that 'household conflicts' are predominantly routine related and that the actual nature of the conflict issues remains unaltered across generations.

<sup>228</sup> The difference between personal, conventional and moral issues is best explained by Turiel (1978). He suggests that the development of reasoning about social events is structured within distinct conceptional domains stemming from qualitatively different aspects of the individual's social interactions. Turiel argues that individual people construct moral judgements out of their personal experiences. A whole range of social actions directly and indirectly shapes these experiences. Turiel (1978) points out that morality focuses on the rights and or well being of others. In contrast, social conventional issues are seen to be predominantly related to a person's experiences with actions whose property is defined by the societal context.

<sup>229</sup> In Smetana's study (1989) adolescents said that 10% of family conflicts were about moral issues. Parents' score of 15% to the same question was slightly higher.

<sup>230</sup> Bilton et al., 1988, p. 121.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

become more accentuated, social class divisions are significantly reduced.<sup>232</sup> For example, Berger and Berger observed that youth culture 'has created symbols and patterns of behaviour that are capable of bestowing status upon individuals coming from quite different class backgrounds... The youth culture has a strongly egalitarian ethos.'<sup>233</sup>

One of the effects of generational divisions can be a serious breakdown in communication. An American study conducted for the magazine 'Parents & Teenages' highlighted the extent of parental lack of knowledge. They found the following<sup>234</sup>:

Questions.	Adolescent response	Parent's response
1. Have you had one or more alcoholic drinks?	66% say yes	34% think they have
2. Have you considered suicide?	43% say yes	15% think they have
3. Have you ever smoked?	41% say yes	14% think they have
4. Do you tell your mom about boyfriends and sex?	36% say yes	80% think they do
5. Have you ever used drugs?	17% say yes	5% think they have
6. Have you lost your virginity?	70% say yes	14% think they have
7. Have you thought about running away from home?	35% say yes	19% think they have

*Table 2: Parental knowledge of adolescent activities*

Some of the exact figures of this study will have changed with time. Also, it is expected that parents with varying parenting styles will respond differently. However, the main point, i.e. parental lack of knowledge of their adolescent's life, is clear and supported by many other studies.<sup>235</sup> That moral responsibility issues such as drugs, drink and crime are a significant part of the life of adolescents in Britain is illustrated by figures reported in a recent survey

<sup>232</sup> It is often suggested that the generational divisions are essentially rooted in a functionalist or neo-functionalist perspective. Sociologists who hold this theory claim that the main reason for generational division is a discontinuity between the value systems of adults and youth. For example, Brake, 1979; Eisenstadt, 1956; Sugarman, 1968.

<sup>233</sup> Berger and Berger, 1972, p. 227.

<sup>234</sup> Quoted by Mueller, 1999, p. 49.

<sup>235</sup> For example, Ben – Amos, 1994; Hurrelmann, 1989; Fustenberg, 1990; Elkind, 1981, 1984, 1994; Modell and Goodman, 1990; Schultze et al., 1993; Youniss and Smollar, 1989.



carried out in confidence by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.<sup>236</sup> For instance, a fifth of boys aged 15 or 16 admitted attacking someone with the intention of seriously hurting them, a third of 14 and 15 year-olds admitting vandalism and more than a quarter said they had stolen from shops. One in three 16 year-old boys has tried cannabis and two in five are regular drinkers. As already pointed out in the introduction of this study, the report also suggests that a strong family bond could be seen as a constructive protective factor helping young people stay away from crime. This, of course, most likely means that the opposite (i.e. poor parental supervision) increases the possibility of a life of crime. By implication, the figures of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation could well suggest that there is a significant number of adolescents who will seek to avoid telling their parents about their culture of drugs, drink, and crime.

On the basis of the above information the researcher hypothesises that silent moral arguments take place in all families. It is therefore expected that the participants of various backgrounds will identify with times that they rather keep moral related information to themselves. More specifically related to the parental styles, the authoritarian parent is understood to have high demands and expect their children to follow set rules.<sup>237</sup> Little room is provided for verbal give and take between the parent and the adolescent.<sup>238</sup> Therefore, the researcher hypothesises that participants who perceive their parents to be authoritarian will score the highest levels of silent moral arguments. In other words, they will be the quickest to conclude that there is no point in discussing their ideas or thoughts on moral matters and will tend to keep them to themselves.

#### 2.5.9. Research focus

- *Kohlberg's theory does not consider the role of parents to be greatly significant for the moral development of adolescents.*
- *Comparison of parent and child moral reasoning levels is not perceived to be a reliable predictor of moral growth.*

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<sup>236</sup> <http://www.jrf.org.uk/pressroom/releases/080402.asp> and Metro, 08-04-02.

<sup>237</sup> Baumrind, 1971.

- *Baumrind's typology for parental styles is chosen as the framework to examine how the difference in parenting influences the development of moral responsibility.*
- *Research examining the link between family structure and the development of moral responsibility is very limited. A wider overview of literature in relation to this topic highlights the complexity of the issue and the influences of a range of various variables on the family situation after divorce.*
- *The DECS is considered to be an effective instrument to code moral- and moral conflict discussions.*
- *'Real-life' dilemmas are chosen as the most effective way to explore speech types during moral- and moral conflict discussions.*
- *'Silent moral argument' is a type of moral issue the adolescent is not prepared or actively seeks to avoid discussing with their parents.*
  
- *Hypotheses*
  - *Authoritative parenting generates higher levels of moral responsibility than authoritarian and permissive parenting.*
  - *Those with permissive parents will show a broader range in the Distributive Aspects of Morality Responsibility Test than the other parenting styles. And within that group will be a still broader range in 'broken' families than 'intact' families.*
  - *Using the DECS instrument as a framework for coding, interview responses provide speech patterns of constructive and destructive conflict.*
  - *The 'silent moral argument' takes place in families of all parental styles but is most accentuated among participants with authoritarian parents.*

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<sup>238</sup> Glasgow, Dornbush, Troyer, Steinberg, and Ritter, 1997.

## **2.6. The influence and contribution of ethnicity on moral responsibility**

*This section explores how cultural differences can have an influence on the development of moral responsibility and how adolescents perceive the effects of parental style at home in relation to this process.*

Does the family environment of a White or Asian adolescent significantly affect development of moral responsibility? Or to put it differently, does ethnic background influence moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg such differences do not form a clear focus in his research. He states:

‘All individuals in all cultures use the same thirty basic moral categories, concepts, or principles, and all cultures go through the same order of sequence of gross stage development, though they vary in rate and terminal point of development.’<sup>239</sup>

Many consider this a rather audacious statement since the theory relies so heavily on late 20<sup>th</sup> century Western notions of social development. As already pointed out, parental style and ethnicity form the two key variables in relation to the development of moral responsibility in this study. Particularly in relation to the latter this research addresses an issue that has been insufficiently examined. In fact, there are very few ethnic specific studies to draw on which examine the development of moral responsibility in relation to ethnicity. This research vacuum is particularly evident outside North America. Nevertheless, a combination of these North American, as well as various other cross-cultural studies, highlights important underlying issues and form the basis for enough evidence to reasonably hypothesise a measurable difference between the two ethnic groups.

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<sup>239</sup> Kohlberg, 1971, p. 175.

It is important for the reader to note that many of the issues examined in this section are linked to discussions elsewhere in this chapter. The writer uses these points as a platform to explore potential ethnic differences in relation to moral development. Starting this final section, attention is first given to studies that have examined the relationship between the development of moral responsibility and ethnic background. Second specific attention is given to the role of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles in individualistic and collective cultures. In this context, special attention will be given to a UK based study comparing mother-daughter relationships in Asian and White British families. Finally, whether Asians are likely to have a higher level of silent moral arguments is examined.

### 2.6.1. Moral responsibility and ethnic background

To get a perspective on this field several relevant studies within the ethnic context are worth discussing. Cooper explored the development of autonomy in families with different ethnic backgrounds.<sup>240</sup> This study concluded that Chinese, Mexican and Vietnamese families recorded higher levels of closeness than European-American families. Other research projects have examined the relationship between parenting style and ethnic orientation. Results concluded that there is significantly less evidence of authoritative parenting among African-American, Asian American or Hispanic-American families<sup>241</sup> than among European-American families. Also, looking at the home environment, Fuligni found that Asian and Latin American adolescents are more likely to accept that they should make sacrifices for the family.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, he found that unlike European Americans, the Asian adolescents would take family wishes, especially in regard to important decisions in life, much more seriously. Finally, Fuligni's research concludes that young people from Asian and Latin-American backgrounds experience a greater sense of obligation to their parents which does not diminish even throughout adulthood.

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<sup>240</sup> Cooper, 1994.

<sup>241</sup> Dornbush et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1992.

<sup>242</sup> Fuligni, 2001.

A broader look at certain Asian related cross-cultural studies, for example research conducted in the Far East, is also judged to be helpful for this discussion. For instance, Shweder et al. conducted their research in India and concluded that the role of both males and females within the family in traditional culture were clearly defined.<sup>243</sup> They liken the acceptance of this hierarchy to the hierarchy in a military unit. For many people in Western society such structures are often considered to be primitive or seen to have a devaluing effect on individuals. However, a subsequent study by Shweder suggests that this viewpoint was not shared among the participants in this study. Shweder et al. found that acceptance of the hierarchy is rooted in the anticipated benefits of asymmetrical reciprocity.<sup>244</sup> For example, dominant roles are accepted because individuals in these positions are expected to protect and promote the welfare of those in subordinate positions. Commenting on this research, Turiel points out that people from such different backgrounds consequently form different conceptions of persons, self and morality.<sup>245</sup> Taking the latter further, one could ask whether this means that one's moral identity is then related to one's position within the overall structure of the family (admittedly this involves extended families in such cultural settings). This leads us to an interesting question in relation to moral responsibility. Given the role and position of any individual in such a cultural environment, is it plausible to expect different levels of moral responsibility depending on their social position?

This concept is explored in more detail in a cross-cultural study conducted by Miller et al. in India and the USA.<sup>246</sup> They interviewed 400 Indian and American adults and children about a situation in which 'an agent failed to help someone experiencing either life-threatening, moderately serious, or a minor need'.<sup>247</sup> It was found that whereas both Americans and Indians agreed that life-threatening situations were moral dilemmas, their understanding did not harmonise in less extreme situations. Miller et al.

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<sup>243</sup> Shweder et al., 1987.

<sup>244</sup> Shweder et al., 1997.

<sup>245</sup> Turiel, 1999.

<sup>246</sup> Miller et al., 1990.

<sup>247</sup> Miller et al., 1990, p. 33.

observed that Indians regard breaches of various friendship and kinship expectations (i.e. helping behaviour and role-related interpersonal responsiveness) as moral issues, a result that is also supported by other studies.<sup>248</sup> Shweder et al. stress that different social communities might not construe the relationship between physical, social and moral issues in the same way at all.<sup>249</sup> They found that a Hindu boy in Dubai might view Heinz's dilemma through the interpretative grid of a belief in reincarnation. Thereby, Heinz's situation would be directly related to the boy's sinful actions in a previous life and consequently his decision regarding options would be interpreted quite differently. Shweder et al. illustrate this point of interpretation further by including a list of worst offences ranked by Hindu Brahmin children aged eight to ten.<sup>250</sup> At the top of the list they put 'the day after father's death, the eldest son had a haircut and ate chicken'. What this example illustrates is that the concept of right and wrong is likely to be influenced by ethnic background. So in answer to the above question, a social position within a certain group does shape the perceived understanding of moral responsibility of the individual within the Indian culture in a different way than in the Western culture of the USA.

It must be noted, however, that identifying the precise functions of this role is far more complex than might appear at first sight. For example, this research did not study individual moral responsibility levels within the same family context. Commenting on this, Helwig, Tisak and Turiel suggest that there are serious doubts whether there is a strong case for the notion of culturally determined moral reasoning.<sup>251</sup> They argue that most people would feel a sense of moral outrage when they hear about torture or racism, regardless of their cultural background or the context in which it takes place. This point is valid yet also highlights the ideals of the researchers. One could argue that often morality is regarded as a product with universal meaning. However, the cross-cultural studies establish that such conclusions are not in line with the perceptions of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. It

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<sup>248</sup> Miller and Luthar, 1989; Shweder et al., 1987.

<sup>249</sup> Shweder et al., 1987.

<sup>250</sup> Shweder et al., 1987.

<sup>251</sup> Helwig, Tisak, and Turiel, 1990.

raises questions about the assumption that there is a particular system that is truly universal as such.

Another issue within this context of cultural influence on moral development is the question of the interpretation of conflict situations. A commonly accepted position is that the interpretation of conflicts is directed in a rational manner.<sup>252</sup> In other words, it is understood that a person faced with a conflict issue will weigh up the likely outcome of his decision. He will evaluate what is expected of him (socially and morally), weigh up the consequences of possible actions and then draw his own conclusions. In contrast, other studies have found evidence that suggests that an individual is actually quite strongly guided by an irrational or non-rational process.<sup>253</sup> The nature of this process and its exact influence still needs more research. This is underlined by Miller et al. who conclude that 'unfortunately little empirical data exists that would permit exploration of this issue, such as data that would permit comparison of individual expectations in the context of a conflict dilemma'.<sup>254</sup>

## 2.6.2. Asian families and parental style

Significant results are found when the relationship between ethnicity and parenting styles (authoritarian and authoritative) is explored. As pointed out earlier, authoritarian parenting is understood to have a constructive and positive effect on pro-social behaviour with peers and higher levels of integration.<sup>255</sup> In contrast, authoritarian parenting is perceived to generate lower levels of pro-social behaviour and self-esteem as well as lower levels of empowerment and sense of self-direction.<sup>256</sup> However, current understanding seems to suggest that these findings are influenced by ethnicity. To be more specific, a distinction should be made between 'individualistic' and 'collective' cultures.<sup>257</sup> As Coleman and Henry point out, within a collective cultural context, it is believed that an adolescent's behaviour and goals should centre

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<sup>252</sup> Smetana, 1983; Smetana, Killen, and Turiel, 1991.

<sup>253</sup> Kagan, 1984; Shewder, Mahapatra, and Miller, 1987.

<sup>254</sup> Miller et al., 1990.

<sup>255</sup> See, for instance, Baumrind, 1971; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Dekovic and Janssens, 1992.

<sup>256</sup> Loeb, 1975; Buri et al., 1988.

<sup>257</sup> Hofstede, 1983.

around the reputation and success of the family and the community of which they form a part.<sup>258</sup> Turiel comments that morality in such cultures is based on fulfilling specified duties and maintaining social order, and therefore not essentially approached from an angle of equality, fairness or rights.<sup>259</sup> In an individualistic culture, adolescents are encouraged to seek their identity through realising their own goals and ideas. Following this, there is much less expectation to act in line with wishes of the family or the community. Ruby et al. show that the understanding of these two cultural types has a significant influence on how one perceives the value and effectiveness of parental styles.<sup>260</sup> They point out that in a collective culture effective parenting might consist of 'the promotion of interdependence and co-operation in children rather than of autonomy.'<sup>261</sup> So where a Western family would emphasise the rights of each individual and value different opinions<sup>262</sup> a family from a collective culture places emphasis on self-restraint and value interdependence and co-operation. In fact, collective cultures are more likely to view self-assertion as negative and individual goals are achieved by relying on the group and helping each other.<sup>263</sup>

Research shows that in this context the teaching of values is less likely to be communicated in an authoritative manner, but rather in a style closer related to Baumrind's description of parental authoritarian standards. This could mean that parents from collectivist groups do not necessarily need to inculcate a sense of co-operative or pro-social behaviour to the same extent as parents from the more individualistic orientated cultures. The main reason for this is that such behaviour flows more naturally from the individual's personal situation in the family.<sup>264</sup> Ruby is eager to stress that adolescents within the collective culture are less likely to label strict and authoritarian parents as negative or restrictive, since within their community this style actually promotes their interests and values. Moreover, they might not even

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<sup>258</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999.

<sup>259</sup> Turiel, 1999.

<sup>260</sup> Ruby et al., 1999.

<sup>261</sup> Ruby et al., 1999, p. 302.

<sup>262</sup> This might even create an environment where types of disobedience are valued if perceived as an expression of the person's individuality. Osterweil and Nagano, 1991.

<sup>263</sup> Hamaguchi, 1985; Markus and Kitayama, 1991.

<sup>264</sup> Schwartz, 1994.



perceive authoritative styles of parenting to be constructive. Also, authoritarian parents from a collective culture are judged to be more flexible than authoritarian parents from a Western individualistic culture. There is also evidence to suggest that authoritarian parents from collective cultures are less likely to interpret children's ambiguous behaviours in a negative light.<sup>265</sup> Consequently, potentially there might be lower frequency of coercive parent – adolescent interchange.<sup>266</sup>

In summary, Ruby and others have demonstrated that the effectiveness and appreciation of parental styles are clearly related to the cultural context. This must, therefore, be understood to have important implications for the present research question. However, it must be noted that all studies above were either conducted within the North American context (with often very different types of Asian populations), or in Eastern cultural contexts.<sup>267</sup> Not one of them considered a second-generation sample as is the case in this study. Therefore, the above research observations are understood to be a valuable guide to explore how parental styles are perceived in cultures with different understanding of self. Since so few researches with this focus are UK based, Gilani's unique study of mother-daughter relationships in Asian and white British families is particularly relevant to conclude this discussion. In line with these findings the researcher wanted to examine how the two different ethnic groups in this study compare with each other in relation to their understanding of moral responsibility. Considering the various effects parental styles have within the various cultures it is hypothesised that Asian participants who judge their parents to be authoritarian will record similar scores in the DAMRT as white participants with authoritative parents. This hypothesis is based on the different value Asians give to parental styles and how different cultural contexts explain authoritarianism.

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<sup>265</sup> Dekovic et al., 1991. Dix and Reinhold, 1991.

<sup>266</sup> Farver and Shin, 1997. Grusec and Goodnow, 1994.

<sup>267</sup> Rudy et al., 1999.

### 2.6.3. British study relating ethnicity and parenting styles

Gilani's study sought to explore how two ethnic groups treated young women as well as the behavioural expectations of mothers.<sup>268</sup> She found that overt conflict was significantly higher in white British families. However, this also resulted in a greater sense of freedom to make decisions, to spend a considerable amount of time with their friends, and choose the type of life they preferred. In contrast, adolescent Asian girls experienced life quite differently. Gilani found that the wishes of the parents took priority. Asian girls also faced different demands at home from their white British friends. Many of them were expected to spend most of their time in the family setting and conform to family norms. Unlike their white British friends they argued or disagreed much less with their parents. Gilani concludes her research by explaining that these findings were in line with the above discussion on individual and collective cultures.

The above clearly highlights that it is reasonable to hypothesise that there is a measurable difference between White parents and their Asian counterparts when it comes to dealing with moral responsibility conflict discussions at home. Particularly, this is expected to be evident with the different parenting styles and how they are understood within each culture. More specifically, it is hypothesised that Asian adolescents will judge their parents to be authoritarian. However, it is not anticipated that they will associate the authoritarian parenting style with negative parenting. Also, Asian adolescents are expected to justify their moral responsibility more in terms of role related interpersonal responsiveness. The researcher anticipates that due to the fact that Asian participants might be taught a higher level of respect for their parents and their viewpoints, they will also score higher levels of moral responsibility. Furthermore, the researcher wants to explore in this study whether similar results as Gilani can be found with regard to stricter parenting among Asians, yet that this style is understood by their children and in many cases judged to be the right approach to family life. It is

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<sup>268</sup> Gilani, 1995.

therefore hypothesised that Asian participants will record lower levels of moral conflict discussions. More specifically, in relation to authoritarian parenting styles, it is hypothesised that white participants of authoritarian parents will express moral disagreement with their parents more than Asian participants with authoritarian parents. This is due to the different ways these groups interpret authoritarianism.

#### 2.6.4. Ethnicity and silent moral argument

When examining the two ethnic variables, White and Asian participants, it is anticipated that the latter will have a higher level of silent moral disagreement. Several reasons could be given for this. Three points are important for this discussion. First, conflicts in Asian families are not just influenced by the generation gap but also by cultural differences.<sup>269</sup> This is related to the pace at which individuals acculturate. For example, Portes found that immigrant parents took longer to adapt to the host culture than their children.<sup>270</sup> Consequently, the situation could arise that, to some extent at least, members of the same family draw their values from differing cultures. Second, conflicts in Asian homes were often found to be significantly influenced by patriarchal traditions of their cultural heritage.<sup>271</sup> Uba observed that Asian parents expect their children to share their values and show a high level of unconditional respect.<sup>272</sup> The emphasis on such expectations was supported by studies conducted by Drury and Giliani with Asian samples.<sup>273</sup> As Phinney and Rosenthal concluded, this does not suggest that conflicts are actually solved.<sup>274</sup> They found that the child was instructed to obey (particularly the father) but not always taught to work out their own reasoning about moral matters. Finally, this mixture of type of conflicts in Asian families can create an environment where the adolescent feels a need to develop various coping strategies. Lee and Liu observed that denial and suppressing

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<sup>269</sup> Phinney, Oug and Madden, 2000; Szapocznic and Kurtines, 1993.

<sup>270</sup> Portes, 1997.

<sup>271</sup> Hussain and O'Brien, 1999.

<sup>272</sup> Uba, 1994.

<sup>273</sup> Drury, 1991; Gilani, 1995.

<sup>274</sup> Phinney and Rosenthal, 1992.

one's thoughts and feelings are common.<sup>275</sup> This type of strategy could also include keeping silent during a moral conflict situation. Admittedly, the studies outlined above are not directly looking at the development of moral responsibility. However, they highlight a potentially different context of expectations within the Asian family. It is conceivable that in such a climate specific moral topics are less likely to be seen as appropriate discussion material. Consequently, a moral silent argument, especially when the participant is more acculturated than his parent, could occur more. It is therefore hypothesised that Asian participants score higher levels of silent moral disagreement than the White participants.

#### 2.6.5. Research focus

- *Research suggests that cultural backgrounds significantly influence the development of moral responsibility.*
- *Most studies examining the relationship between parental styles and cultural background are conducted in the USA with often very different Asian populations than the present sample.*
- *Studies comparing families of individualistic and collective cultures suggest that authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles are perceived differently because of the demands of the interpersonal situation in both contexts.*
- *Gilian's research, with an all-female population, found that levels of family conflict were much lower in Asian families than in White families.*
- *Hypotheses*
  - *Asian participants will score higher moral responsibility levels than white participants.*
  - *White participants with perceived authoritative parent will show higher levels of moral responsibility than those with authoritarian or permissive parents.*

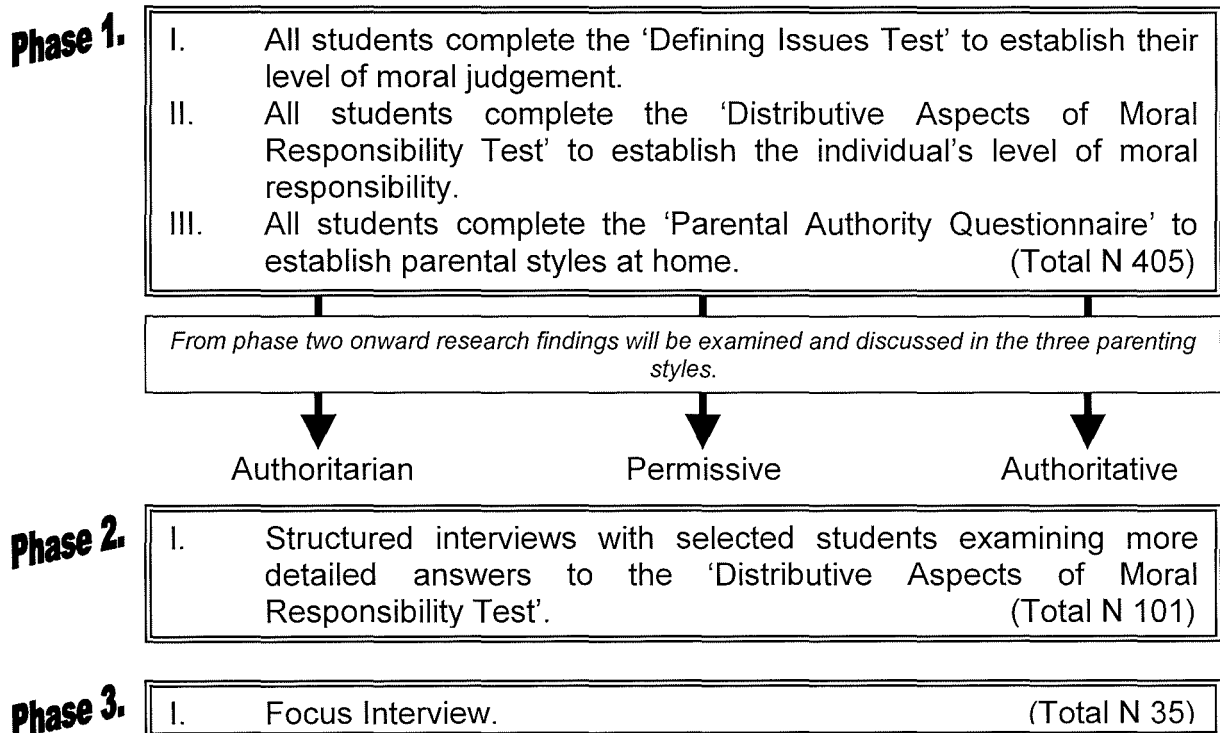
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<sup>275</sup> Lee and Liu, 2001.

- Asian participants who judge their parents to be authoritarian will record similar scores in the DAMRT as white participants with authoritative parents.
- Asian participants will record lower levels of moral conflict discussions.
- White participants of authoritarian parents will express their disagreement with their parents significantly more than Asian adolescents of authoritarian parents.
- White participants of authoritarian parents and Asian participants of authoritative parents will record a similar level of silent moral arguments.

## 2.7. Overview of research structure

To conclude this chapter it is judged helpful to list all the research questions within the framework of the various phases of the research. The various questionnaires and interviews used in this study are set in a schematic way below. This is followed by the four research questions, mentioning briefly the phase they are addressed in.



1. Do parental style, family structure, and cultural background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?

This is examined in research phases one, two and three.

2. Within the context of understanding of moral responsibility of adolescents, how do parents with different parenting styles, family structure and cultural background communicate and formulate parental responsibility during a moral conflict situation at home?

This is examined in research phase two and three.

3. How often and to what extent do adolescents avoid discussing their opinion regarding moral responsibility with their parents when they disagree with them? Has the parental style, family structure, or cultural background a measurable influence on the frequency and nature of 'silent' disagreements?

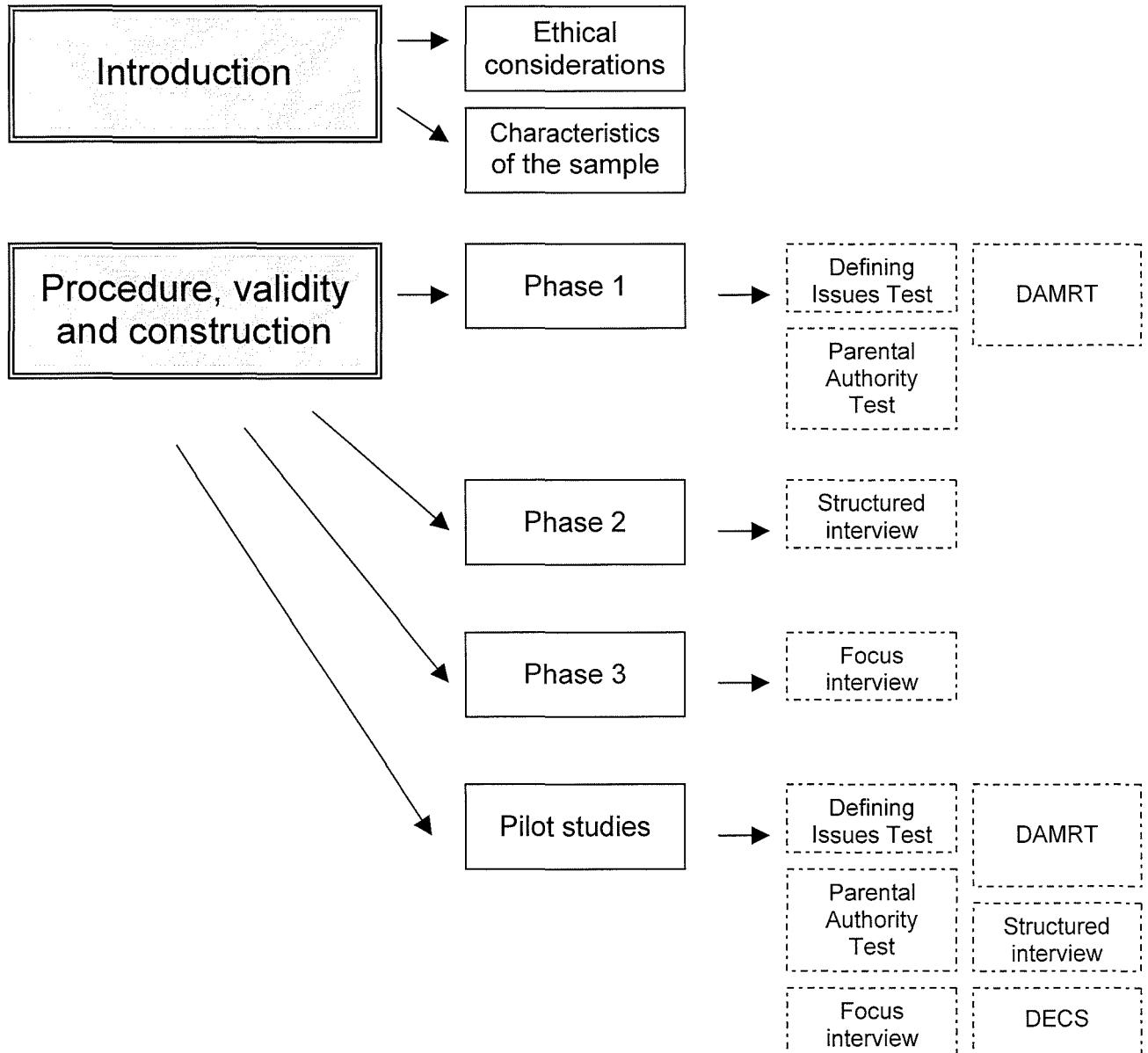
This is examined in research phase three.

4. In what sense does an understanding framework enable an adolescent to increase his moral responsibility?

This is examined in research phase three.

# Methods

## Schematic overview Methods Chapter





### 3. Methods Chapter

#### 3.1. Introduction

Seeking to explore and examine the above research questions, this chapter will outline the various instruments used in this study. The research project consists of three 'phases' conducted in the school and / or the home environment. To guide the discussion of each test, a brief overview of the three different phases is judged helpful.

The research is divided into three different phases of data gathering:

1. Whole school questionnaires.
2. Structured interviews with selected students on the basis of the DAMRT.
3. Focus Interview.

#### Phase 1.

Type of research method:	- <i>quantitative research</i>
Research strategy:	- <i>experiment</i>
Nature of research:	- <i>verificatory / exploratory</i>
N participants:	- 400 (male and female students between 11 – 16 years old)
Research tools:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>I. 'Defining Issues Test' to establish participant's level of moral judgement.</li><li>II. DAMRT to establish participant's direct-cause, self-regulation, and continuing responsibility.</li><li>III. 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' to establish participant's perceived parental styles at home.</li></ol>

#### Phase 2.

Type of research method:	- <i>quantitative / qualitative research</i>
Research strategy:	- <i>survey (cross-sectional design &amp; stratified random sampling)</i>
Nature of research:	- <i>exploratory</i>
N participants:	- 101 (male and female students between 11 – 16 years old)
Research tools:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>I. Interviews with selected students examining justifications for answers to the DAMRT.</li></ol>

### Phase 3.

Type of research method:	- <i>qualitative</i>
Research strategy:	- <i>case study</i>
Nature of research:	- <i>exploratory</i>
N participants:	- 35 (male and female students between 11 – 16 years old and their parents.
Research tools:	I. Focus Interview

Due to the level of interrelated issues inherent to the research topic, this study will gather both quantitative as well as qualitative data. The research design is 'funnel like' in the sense that in phase one all Year 9, 10, and 11 students at the school will be asked to complete tests. Phase two and three take increasingly smaller samples focusing on more specific questions, using two types of interview techniques.

Phase one consists of three tests that will be completed by most participants. First, the 'Defining Issues Test' is chosen to establish the individual's moral judgement level.<sup>1</sup> In a recent publication discussing the validity and reliability of this established instrument, the authors present data gathered over a 25-year period and cite over 400 published reports on the DIT.<sup>2</sup> The main points of their work will be discussed in this chapter. Second, students at the school are asked to complete the DAMRT. This test will examine the participants' views on moral responsibility. A series of different short case studies were grouped under three headings; direct-cause, self-regulation, and continuing responsibility. The final test in phase one is the 'Parental Authority Questionnaire.' The study will compare and contrast data within three parenting styles, namely: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative.<sup>3</sup> This instrument, developed by Buri, enables the researcher to select examples of the various parental styles for phase two and three of the study.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this study 'Defining Issues Test' is referred to as 'DIT'.

<sup>2</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Researched and developed by Baumrind, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Buri, 1991.

Phase two will focus particularly on the participants' perception of the nature of moral responsibility. This structured interview uses the case studies from the DAMRT as the bases for the interview with selected students from different gender and age groups. Specific attention is given to the reasoning (justifications) for their replies as to what is considered fair and, their moral responsibility.

The final phase of this study examines the actual moral (conflict) discussions at home and therefore is predominately qualitative in nature. The researcher has designed a focus interview to explore this issue. Participants are asked to discuss how they perceive moral discussions and conflict situations at home. This interview also seeks to explore the unspoken yet influential issues related to the discussion, as well as the role of religious commitment in the formulation of their concept of moral responsibility. Given the specific interest in ethnicity the interview does raise various issues considered to be influential within the two cultures (white and Asian) examined.

### **3.2. *Ethical considerations and role of the researcher***

Oppenheim points out that the 'basic ethical principle governing data collection is that no harm should come to the respondents as a result of their participation in the research.'<sup>5</sup> Harm can be defined in many different ways, but in relation to the present research it is possible that some of the material covered in the questionnaire or discussed in the interviews puts the participant in touch with some sensitive issues in their life. Potentially, this could be an uncomfortable and upsetting situation. On top of that is the issue that the participants were selected because they were students at a certain school. Therefore the researcher had to ask for permission, since the students were under age. First, the Head Teacher was approached about the project. Second, a letter went home to all students who were targeted for the research, requesting their parents' permission to ask their child to participate

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<sup>5</sup> Oppenheim, 1992, p. 83.

in the research. Third, when the student was approached for the final, in depth and potentially more sensitive interview the parent was called and the goals of this phase of the research were explained for them. Finally, at the beginning of every questionnaire or interview the participants were reminded about their right to privacy and their right to refuse to answer questions.

It could be argued that the role of the researcher was weakened because of his position as a teacher at the same school. For example, one could suggest that it is more difficult to talk to the teacher about the home situation, or that because of the teacher's role, the participants would feel a certain level of 'pressure' to provide the researcher with what they perceived should be the correct answer. In other words, the role of the teacher has a punitive side, which might have had a bearing on the answers provided. If the students felt a need to obey the teacher rather than share their thoughts with the researcher, this study could potentially produce unreliable data. Although concerns such as these are relevant, one can also argue that the researcher's role in the school actually benefited the overall process of data collection. An important reason for this is the fact that several of the issues discussed could potentially be considered sensitive. The question is therefore; would it be easier in such situations to talk to a 'stranger' or a teacher who knows you? To answer this, one would ideally need to compare interviews conducted by both types of interviewers. However, due to the scope and sources for the present study it was concluded that the dual role of the teacher / researcher was considered to create the best context given the specific situation. Since this could be judged to be a potential weakness, great care was taken to provide the participant with the choice to participate or not. Also, it was repeatedly emphasised to the student that this research was not related to school and that the elicited information would not be used during class discussions or any other school related information opportunities. Overall it was perceived that the participants were eager to take part. Neither did they communicate that talking about moral issues at home was understood to be unsettling because the interviewer was their teacher as well as the researcher.

### **3.3. *Characteristics of the sample***

This research is based at a secondary school of about 1100 students in Greater London. The school is situated in the less affluent southern half of one LEA. The area is marked with a degree of social deprivation. For example, there is a higher proportion of rented accommodation, of families receiving support, and a higher representation of ethnic minorities, including refugees, than in the Northern part of the borough. A relatively high number of pupils have experienced a troubled or disrupted family environment. Lack of support in some cases affects attendance and punctuality. About a quarter are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. About seven per cent have severe reading difficulties and the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above average. Attainment in the school population tends toward average and below. About a quarter come from homes where English is not the first language, although most have no difficulties with English. Most of these students are second generation Asians. The social composition of the intake is not entirely comprehensive in range, with an under-representation of professional families.<sup>6</sup>

### **3.4. *Pilot studies***

Each of the instruments was piloted to test its readability, comprehension of instructions and effectiveness of the research method. The pilot groups varied in number depending on the nature of the instrument. The researcher ensured that the participants had similar characteristics (i.e. age, gender and ethnic background) to those of the participants used in the main study itself. By doing this, the researcher sought to ensure that potential difficulties with the instruments could be addressed and / or corrected.

As discussed in the Literature Review, two of the three questionnaires used in this research were developed in the USA.<sup>7</sup> The DAMRT questionnaire and the interviews were developed specifically for this study. In order to ensure that there is sufficient evidence that each test works as

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<sup>6</sup> Source: OFSTED report 1998.

<sup>7</sup> The Defining Issues Test (DIT) and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ).

intended, the goals of the pilot studies can be broken down into four specific parts:

1. To establish that the instructions of the test were understood by the participants.
2. To determine how much time the participants needed to complete the tests.
3. To determine whether tasks are sufficiently sensitive to discriminate among participants.
4. To examine whether the questionnaire can be judged reliable.

In line with these goals each test will be discussed accordingly. The remainder of this chapter will discuss each instrument in turn starting with those used during the first phase of the research.

### **3.5. *Defining Issues Test*<sup>8</sup>**

This test was given to one hundred and sixty-eight participants to complete, representing the three different Year groups. The goal of this test was to establish that the sample in this study could be considered to have average moral reasoning levels. Given that the instrument to measure moral responsibility was developed for this research it was considered important to establish that the sample in this study could be seen to score average moral reasoning levels. This information is understood to be important, especially in relation to comparing present research findings with other studies in the field of moral development. Given the purpose of the instrument in the overall research objectives, it was not essential to ask the entire sample to complete this test.

The test was given to the participants during a school lesson. There was more than sufficient time for each participant to complete all the questions. Each participant selected their own answers and was not allowed to discuss them with other students in the class.

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<sup>8</sup> Referred to as 'DIT'.

The researcher was confronted with one difficulty while administering this test. The researcher was given only a limited amount of time during lessons to gather the data. The fact was that not all participants could complete the three tests in this time period. Given the centrality of the other data to the overall research aims these two questionnaires were given priority. The researcher considered whether to ask the other participants to answer the DIT at home. However, this was not considered worthwhile since the likelihood of data pollution would significantly be increased. Consequently, it must be noted that the results gathered by using this instrument with only a sample of the total population will not produce conclusive answers. Nevertheless, given the time limitations it was judged useful to give the DIT to a sample of the population so that the researcher could find any reasons to suggest that the present sample should not be understood to have average moral reasoning levels.

### 3.5.1. Background to Defining Issues Test

As already pointed out, the DIT was originally developed over 25 years ago. Subsequently it has formed the basis for hundreds of research projects.<sup>9</sup> However, this instrument, like Kohlberg's theory, has its fair share of critics. For example, it has been argued that the main support for the DIT is provided by unpublished references such as doctoral dissertations, conference presentations and unpublished manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> If such is the case then evaluation of the validity and reliability studies are hindered by accessibility. Another prevalent criticism of the DIT research is the issue of its assumptions regarding moral development. To interact with these criticisms Rest, proposes seven points that define the validity for the DIT.<sup>11</sup> These points are:<sup>12</sup>

1. Differentiate groups assumed to have greater or lesser expertise in moral reasoning.
2. Show significant upward change in longitudinal study.

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<sup>9</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Rest, 1979, 1986b.

<sup>11</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999, p 61.

3. Is sensitive to interventions designed to improve moral reasoning.
4. Show evidence of a developmental hierarchy.
5. Significantly predict real-life moral behaviour.
6. Significantly predict political attitudes, political choices, and the way in which a person participates in the larger society.
7. Have adequate reliability. There are additional DIT studies besides the research addressing these criteria, but the focus in this part of the study is on validity research.

These seven points will form the framework to discuss the validity and reliability of the DIT. Each of them will be discussed in turn.

#### 3.5.1.1. Differentiate groups assumed to have greater or lesser expertise in moral reasoning.

The first study examining this question was conducted by Rest.<sup>13</sup> This was based on a common age / education trend study. This research was followed by a more extensive study, involving 1,080 participants, conducted by Davison.<sup>14</sup> An ANOVA produced a main effect for educational level (four levels),  $F=203.3$  ( $df= 3,1008$ ;  $p< .001$ ), establishing a very strong differentiation of age / education groups on the DIT. Nearly ten years later, Thoma compiled 56 studies into a composite sample of 6,863 participants.<sup>15</sup> These were grouped into four educational levels and Thoma concluded that 52.5% of the variance was due to education, whereas gender of the participant accounted for only 0.2%.<sup>16</sup> A closer look at the differences between genders show that females have higher averages. Since Thoma's meta-analysis no other study has challenged the conclusion that gender is a trivial variable in accounting for DIT variance.

In recent years a more complex composite sample was composed.<sup>17</sup> The aim of this study was to compare ten, rather than four, levels of

<sup>13</sup> Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, and Anderson, 1974.

<sup>14</sup> Davison, 1979.

<sup>15</sup> Thoma, 1986.

<sup>16</sup> The four educational levels are: Junior High, Senior High, College, and Graduate of Professional school.

<sup>17</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999, pp. 66 – 70.



education.<sup>18</sup> This study concludes that both rating and ranking data show that post-conventional morality systematically increases from less expert groups to more expert groups. It also emerges that the single P score is actually a good indicator of the development in moral judgement itself. ANOVA on P scores for rates produces  $F = 75.992$ ,  $d.f. = 9,979$ ,  $p < .001$ . ANOVA for ranks produces  $F$  of  $101.331$ ,  $d.f. = 9,979$ ,  $p < .001$ . When data from this study is put into four education groups, ANOVA produces an  $F$  of  $256.6$ ,  $p < .001$ . Rest concludes that clearly the most powerful demographic variable to predict DIT P scores is the level of formal education.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.5.1.2. Show significant upward change in longitudinal study

Although it is clear that various individuals display different use of post-conventional thinking, it could be questioned how one establishes that the differences in the DIT scores actually represent developmental differences. To address this question longitudinal data is valuable. In the first study of this kind, participants were followed for a period of ten years.<sup>20</sup> Three tests were taken with the following P scores averages: Time 1 =  $33.1$  ( $SD=13.6$ ), Time 2 (two years later) =  $39.6$  ( $SD = 13.6$ ), and Time 3 (ten years later) =  $47.0$  ( $SD=14.2$ ). Repeated measures MANOVA produced an  $F = 23.07$ ,  $p < .001$ . Rest concluded that there is longitudinal evidence of general upward movement.<sup>21</sup>

In a more recent review of nine longitudinal studies (sample total  $N = 755$ ), McNeel examines moral growth among freshmen to senior college students.<sup>22</sup> He concludes that college experience seems to be a very effective place for fostering moral judgement development.<sup>23</sup> A large body of longitudinal data is in agreement with the cross-sectional data. For example, each higher level of education results in an average increase of about 10 points in DIT P score.

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<sup>18</sup> The ten educational levels are: Junior High 1, Junior High 2, Junior High 3, Senior High 1, Senior High 2, College 1, College 2, Medical Graduates, Seminary Graduates, and Philosophy and Political graduates.

<sup>19</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Rest 1986b. The tests took place during the 1970's and 1980's.

<sup>21</sup> Rest, 1986b.

<sup>22</sup> McNeel, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Two obvious reasons for this seem to be that college students rethink and re-examine their ideas about the value of morality. Also that many colleges greatly value critical reasoning.

#### 3.5.1.3. Sensitivity to interventions designed to improve moral reasoning

In many moral educational programmes the DIT has been used as a pre- and post-test instrument. The goal of this is to assess the effectiveness of a programme in terms of enhancing judgement development. Such studies are relevant to the study of validity since they examine whether moral education programmes produce significant upward change on the DIT. Intervention studies and longitudinal studies are alike in their testing and re-testing method. A marked difference, however, is that the time between the tests is often longer in the latter type of study.

A meta-analysis of 55 intervention studies, reported by Schaepli concludes several major trends.<sup>24</sup> First, the intervention programme with most significant pre- and post-tests were constructed around dilemma discussions. Second, the intervention based on the traditional academic course, displayed lowest gains in the DIT scores. Third, older participants scored higher than younger participants. Finally, intervention programmes shorter than three weeks showed no significant results.

More recently Rest examined four sets of tests (total  $n = 516$ ).<sup>25</sup> Each individual set produced a significant upward change on the DIT, with matched t-tests on the individual studies ranging from 3.62 to 9.16 (all significant at  $p < .001$ ). The t-test for the combined sample (pre to post) was 11.2 ( $p < .001$ ) effect size .54. Rest lists over 60 publications (1976 – 1997) which provide the reader with many different types of populations as well as different types of professional groups.

#### 3.5.1.4. Developmental hierarchy.

As pointed out earlier, there is significant evidence to conclude that post-conventional thinking increases with development. However, the question could be asked: What evidence is there to suggest that post-conventional thinking is more advanced than conventional thinking? Some

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<sup>24</sup> Schlaefli, et al., 1985.

<sup>25</sup> Rest, et al., 1997.

philosophers claim that to reach such a conclusion is incorrect.<sup>26</sup> Rest addresses the question of whether higher DIT scores equals higher moral development by examining three different types of studies; moral comprehension studies; correlations with other developmental measures; and recall and reconstruction.<sup>27</sup> Each of these, and the way they affect the issue of reliability, will be discussed briefly.

The moral comprehension studies are the types of studies that examine the participants' ability to paraphrase or restate a moral argument.<sup>28</sup> Instead of exploring moral reasoning or action the focus in this type of research is on understanding. One of the conclusions of these studies is that moral comprehension is cumulative. In other words, when a participant understands a certain level of morality, he would also understand lower levels. Taking this a step further, researchers asked participants which moral arguments they found most interesting. The large majority responded by saying they preferred the higher stages of moral arguments.<sup>29</sup> The moral comprehension tests suggest that as moral comprehension increases so do new ways of thinking. Rest therefore concludes by asking, 'who said higher stages are better? One answer is: Participants do themselves.'<sup>30</sup>

A second way of exploring whether higher scores are better is by comparing them with other developmental measures. In other words, if DIT scores represent higher forms of thinking this should correlate with research in other developmental measures.<sup>31</sup> Evidence for this point of view can be found in various studies. For example, significant correlations are found for measures such as reflective judgement ( $r = .46$  and  $.58$ )<sup>32</sup>, Loevinger ego development ( $r = .40$ )<sup>33</sup>, Kohlberg's test ( $r = .78$  to  $.34$ )<sup>34</sup>, ethical reasoning inventory ( $r = .57$ )<sup>35</sup>, dental ethical sensitivity test ( $r$  ranging from  $.20$  to  $.50$ )<sup>36</sup>,

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<sup>26</sup> Modgil and Modgil, 1986.

<sup>27</sup> Rest, et al., 1999, p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Rest, 1969, 1973, Rest, et al., 1969.

<sup>29</sup> Rest, 1969.

<sup>30</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999, p. 77.

<sup>31</sup> Rest, Narvaes, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999, p. 79.

<sup>32</sup> King and Kitchener, 1994.

<sup>33</sup> Rest, 1979.

<sup>34</sup> Rest, 1979.

<sup>35</sup> Page and Bode, 1982.

<sup>36</sup> Rest, Bebeau, and Volker, 1986.

and various aptitude and academic achievement tests ( $r$  ranging from .20 - .50).<sup>37</sup>

Finally, in more recent years a new line of research has emerged, namely recall and reconstruction.<sup>38</sup> For this study several narratives with moral dilemmas were constructed. College and 12 year old students were contrasted for their ability to recall and reconstruct the moral arguments in the narratives. Narvaez concluded that the higher P scores showed greater recall and reconstruction of the high stage moral arguments than the lower P scores ( $p < .02$ ).<sup>39</sup>

#### 3.5.1.5. Significantly predict to real-life moral behaviour.

A key question in relation to the validity of the DIT is whether it actually relates to anything beyond itself. For example, is it possible that the tests only have relevance to a minute spectrum of an individual's experience of life, without saying anything significant about that person's behaviour in his day to day situation?

Rest et. al. point out that higher scores on the DIT have been linked to various "pro-social" behaviours.<sup>40</sup> A longitudinal study coded by Deemer concludes higher "community involvement" ( $r = .31$ ) and "civic responsibility" ( $r = .44$ ).<sup>41</sup> Both correlations were significant ( $p < .01$ ). Thoma et. al. examined the links between DIT P scores and various behaviour measures.<sup>42</sup> They concluded that 32 out of 47 analyses are statistically significant. More recently, Rest and Narvaez quote, in a publication on moral development in professions, over 60 studies which relate DIT scores to various measures of behaviour and decision making.<sup>43</sup> This confirms that the DIT hypothetical dilemmas do connect with something important in human behaviour.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Rest, 1979.

<sup>38</sup> Narvaez, 1998.

<sup>39</sup> This is after controlling for differences in general recall of non-moral material (i.e. reading level of the participant) and age/education (college student versus 12 Year old). Narvaez, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Rest, 1986b; Deemer, 1986, 1989.

<sup>42</sup> Thoma, Rest, and Barnett, 1986.

<sup>43</sup> Rest and Narvaez, 1994.

<sup>44</sup> It must be noted that the link between DIT scores and behaviour measures does not suggest that high P scores equals happiness, job satisfaction, or success. Ponemon (1992), Schiller (1997), and Thoma et al., (1997) show that happiness must be understood separately from a high P score.

However, it must be noted that this does not suggest that this has been exhaustively researched. For example, it is not examined with various other test methods, notably those based on real and experienced moral dilemmas. It is this very area that, as has been discussed earlier, is a particular focus of the present study during the interview in phase three.<sup>45</sup>

3.5.1.6. Significantly predict political attitudes, political choices, and the way in which a person participates in the larger society.

This criterion is similar to the former in the sense that it relates the DIT to external variables. Rest et. al. point out that statistically a strong link can be expected between morality and political attitudes.<sup>46</sup> Whereas in personal moral issues the individual is concerned with personal relationships, one could say that how people relate to each other in society at large involves a much wider structure than a web of relationships. The concept of society is a cognitive one.<sup>47</sup> It is at the very centre of Kohlbergian thinking to understand how this concept of society is cognitively assembled.<sup>48</sup> Rest et. al. argue that DIT scores are particularly illuminating of the political decision making process.<sup>49</sup> In the DIT case studies, issues such as law and order attitudes, political toleration, civil libertarianism, and the need to protect society are explored. In their book Rest et. al. publish a review of the association of the DIT's P score with political attitudes in studies between 1970's – 1990's.<sup>50</sup> This overview shows consistently that DIT's P scores are strongly correlated with measures of political attitudes.

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<sup>45</sup> Rest et al., (1999) point recognise that if these measures show superiority in actual demonstrations, it must be considered if they should re-place Kohlbergian dilemmas.

<sup>46</sup> Rest et al., (1999). Whereas a for criterion 5 an association of 5 – 20% was normal, studies have measured as high a 40% for criterion 6.

<sup>47</sup> An individual cannot directly see society as such, but evidence is provided in imagination to constitute the concepts.

<sup>48</sup> Other theorists have also commented on this idea and described how adolescents need to discover society. Cf. Adelson, 1971, Youniss and Yates, 1997.

<sup>49</sup> Rest et. al., 1999, p. 84. See also McClosky and Brill, 1983. They commented: 'The more one knows and understands about public affairs, the higher the probability that one will respond favourably to the various libertarian rights included in the omnibus civil liberties scales we developed for each study.' p. 317.

<sup>50</sup> Rest et. al., 1999, p. 87.

### 3.5.1.7. Have adequate reliability.

There are additional DIT studies besides the research addressing reliability. In one study the Cronbach alpha on the DIT is as follows:<sup>51</sup>

Cronbach Alphas of P and N2 indexes		
Sample	P index	N2 Index
1979 Composite sample, N = 994	.79	.80
1995 Composite sample, N = 932	.78	.83

*Table 3 : Cronbach Alphas of P and N2 indexes*

This shows that the internal consistency is adequate. However, the Cronbach Alpha test is only one way of evaluating reliability. Given the fact that the DTI is a multiple-choice test, there is the potential that participants provide the researcher with fake answers or try to influence the study in the sense that they want to give highly moral answers.

### 3.5.2. Pilot study of the DIT

Given the vast amount of reliable data already available for this instrument, the main focus of the pilot study was readability and comprehension of the questionnaire. Therefore, a total of thirty case studies (ten of each variation) were given to thirty different students.<sup>52</sup> Feedback from the readers and participants showed that the actual case studies were easy to read though some of the statements were at times somewhat confusing. An illustration of the latter was option 7 in relation to 'Case Study 1' which says; 'Whether the essence of living is more encompassing than the termination of dying, socially and individually.' As with the instrument discussed above, it was clear that some of the students with a lower reading level would benefit if the test was read to them. For the rest, the lay-out and different scoring sections were considered to be clearly marked, and as such understood.

In summary, the pilot study showed that the DIT could be used in the context of this research if some of the wording was somewhat simplified to access a broader range of students. It was also concluded that reading the

<sup>51</sup> Rest et. al., 1999, p. 92.

<sup>52</sup> This obviously meant that the researcher could not calculate the actual level of moral reasoning, since one needs a minimum of three case studies of each individual to calculate this score.

test to some student groups would increase the accessibility of this questionnaire.

### **3.6.            *Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test***<sup>53</sup>

The DAMRT was given to four hundred and five participants. The purpose of this instrument was to measure the moral reasoning level of individual participants. The test was administered during a school lesson. There was more than sufficient time for every participant to complete all the questions. All participants were asked to read the various case studies carefully and answer every question. Discussion with other participants was not allowed and the participants were told to omit the questions they were unsure of or confused about, rather than guess an answer. To some of the groups with students who had significant reading difficulties, the test was read aloud by the researcher.

#### **3.6.1.            Background to the Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test**

The case-studies in the test cover school related moral responsibility situations as well as out of school situations. Following Warton and Goodnow's model, the case-studies are divided into the three principles as discussed in the Literature Review.<sup>54</sup>

##### **3.6.1.1.            Direct-cause responsibility**

The case-studies present the participants with ten moral responsibility situations to check if the participant believes that they should fix their own problems they have created. Participants are given the following instruction: "Imagine that you find yourself in all of these 10 situations. Indicate on a scale of 1 - 5 whether you think that you only are responsible, partly

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<sup>53</sup> Referred to as 'moral responsibility test'.

<sup>54</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991.

responsible, or that someone else is completely responsible. Also, state about each situation whether it is fair that you were held responsible.”

#### 3.6.1.2. Self-regulation

This case-studies present the participants with three moral responsibility situations to examine whether the respondents expect to be reminded or paid for a job that they consider theirs. As with the above instructions the participant is asked to score on a 1 – 5 scale for responsibility and fairness. The responsibility situations in this section of the test are more developmental, in the sense that the students are asked to express their answers at different stages of the case-study. In other words, as the ‘story’ goes on, the situation also develops into more complex questions.

#### 3.6.1.3. Continuing responsibility

As with the self-regulation test, participants are presented with three moral responsibility situations. Each is related to a situation where another person does something for the person ultimately responsible. For example, a friend looks after a younger brother when the mother has clearly delegated that responsibility to the adolescent. This part of the questionnaire wants to examine whether it is fair to be checked on, or whether or not the individual was responsible. Second, the question is posed whether it is fair that the individual gets into trouble when the job is not done. In line with the two above sections of this test, scores are on a 1 – 5 scale for responsibility. Like the self-regulation test, the case study and questions in this task are presented in a developmental context.

### 3.6.2. Construction of the DAMRT<sup>55</sup>

This test is structured into three parts. Each part consists of several questions related to each of the three principles outlined by Warton and Goodnow’s article on the nature of responsibility.<sup>56</sup> These are; ‘Direct-cause

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<sup>55</sup> In this research referred to as DAMRT.

<sup>56</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991.



responsibility'<sup>57</sup>, 'Self-regulation'<sup>58</sup>, and 'Continuing responsibility'.<sup>59</sup> The participants score their fairness judgement on a scale of 1 – 5.<sup>60</sup> The short case- studies are based on moral issues discussed on the internet. Also, the researcher has conducted a brief survey among Year 9 (aged 14) students to establish the topics of moral issues discussed at home. Due to the pastoral responsibilities of the researcher at the school he has also been able to draw on real-life situations as related to him by the participants. The latter point is very important since it is an important objective of this questionnaire that the issues discussed relate to real life issues as much as possible.

The participants are given the questionnaire individually. Each individual is given a code so that the researcher can trace the answers to each participant. Participants who do not want to disclose information are not considered for the research. This questionnaire is given together with the 'Parental Authority Test'. For both tests participants are given about an hour for completion. Separate work (not related to this research) is provided for those participants who finish early. This is to ensure an atmosphere of focus, calm and respect. Some of the participants have a reading age of lower than 11 years and therefore are supported to guarantee sufficient understanding. If, for any reason, the participant is not able to complete the question, he is asked to leave it blank.

### 3.6.3. Pilot study of the DAMRT

Since this questionnaire was designed specifically for the present study, no reliability scores were available as reference points. It was therefore paramount to examine the gathered data within the context of the four goals as set out in section 3.4. The questionnaire was given to thirty-nine Year 9 students from two different schools other than the school of the

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<sup>57</sup> Meaning, if you have created the need to solve or fix it, you are responsible and others should not be asked to do so.

<sup>58</sup> Meaning, what you are meant to be responsible for, you should not need to be reminded to be responsible.

<sup>59</sup> Meaning, if you have delegated your responsibility to someone else, you are still ultimately responsible.

<sup>60</sup> One being absolutely unfair; two, sort of unfair; three, don't know; four, sort of fair; and five, absolutely fair.

participants for the actual study. The reason for including a second school was to ensure a sizeable number (N = 15) of English Asian responses. Year 9 students were selected since they are the youngest group taking part in the study and therefore it was judged important to assess readability and level of understanding of this age-group. In relation to the first goal, feed-back from readers and participants was very positive. Both groups commented that the instructions and layout of the questionnaire were clear and easy to understand. Besides the correction of a few typing and some grammatical errors, no changes were made to the initial questionnaire.

The second goal of the pilot study is related to the timing of the questionnaire. This test was given in conjunction with the Parental Authority Questionnaire. It was important to establish whether the participants could complete both tests within the time limit of one lesson (1 hour). This proved to be no problem since there were no participants who needed extra time. In fact, it became apparent that it would be beneficial to have some other materials (not related to the research) to keep the fast readers occupied while other participants were finishing their questionnaires.

The third goal deals with task sensitivity. The readers raised a gender issue in regard to the wording in a few moral dilemmas. Overall, the questionnaire could be perceived to be too much orientated to boys, whereas some other questions (particularly question 7<sup>61</sup>) were potentially too specific to a girl's interests and experience. To compensate for this, several names in the questionnaire were changed to lessen the gender issue (i.e. names such as Chris, Pat and Kim were used). Also, case-studies were described in more general terms to make it less gender specific. For example, rather than specifically talking about football, the game was described as 'a game with a ball', or a shopping trip to buy a swimming costume was described as a shopping trip 'to get some new clothes'. These changes were judged to be an overall improvement, which was confirmed by the participants who felt that they were able to relate to each of the case-studies.

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<sup>61</sup> This question talked about a girl stealing a swimming costume from a shop.

Finally, the reliability of the DAMRT was judged. In order to establish the reliability of the questionnaire the data was analysed using the SPSS 11 software package. First, the variance of the data was analysed. As can be seen in table 1, mean and standard deviation show a sufficient spread. In fact, there is not a single question that shows a substantially low level of variance that it should be omitted. A couple of questions are tightly clustered, but this is not judged to be a major weakness of the questionnaire. Given the limited cases in the sample it is quite possible this will be different in a larger sample. Also, these particular questions will clearly identify a few participants who significantly differ from the rest of the sample as to how they rate their level of moral responsibility.

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation
3	1.58	.98
1	1.87	1.14
11	2.03	1.22
16	3.97	1.15
7	3.95	.93
17	3.92	1.19

*Table 4: Reliability analysis three highest and three lowest means*

Second, a plotted graph of the questionnaire showed that this test displayed a normal distribution. Third, the alpha of the questionnaire was calculated to examine the reliability of the test. The alpha score for this test is .67, which is judged satisfactory. Two questions (2 and 10c) would have improved the alpha score with respectively .69 and .71. Question 10c obviously lowers the alpha score and therefore it was considered to omit this question altogether. However, the researcher chose not to for the following reasons. First, the alpha score is only marginally improved by omitting these two questions. Second, it was a source for relevant differences between the two groups which could account for the lower alpha.<sup>62</sup> Finally, although not pointed out by the participants as confusing, the wording in question 10c<sup>63</sup> might have misled

<sup>62</sup> The research is particularly interested in the cultural differences and how these two groups react to the issue of money in order to influence positive moral behaviour.

<sup>63</sup> The question related to whether the school counsellor should buy bullies a cinema ticket in order to help them stop their habit.

some participants in thinking that the counsellor had already promised the cinema ticket and consequently the question was whether he was responsible to keep that promise. To clarify this issue it was stated in the case study that the counsellor was 'considering' making a deal with the students in order to help them stop bullying.

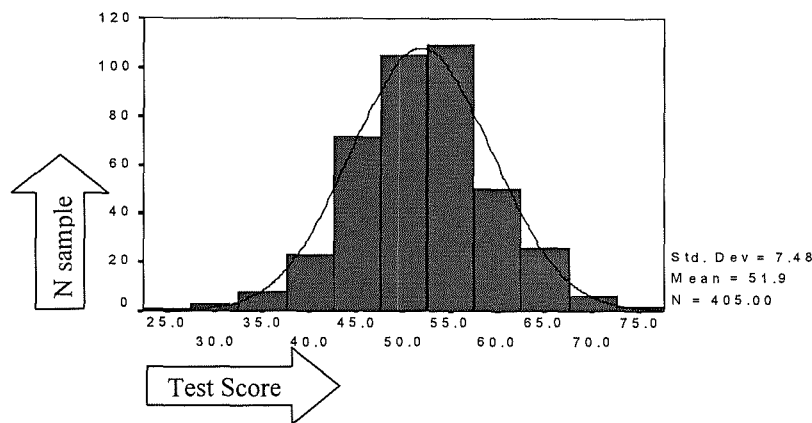
In summary the pilot study of the DAMRT had a positive outcome. The statistical analysis confirmed that the questionnaire was reliable and the feedback from the readers and participants was constructive, which resulted in a comprehensive and effective measuring instrument to examine the level of moral responsibility of adolescents.

#### 3.6.4. Reliability of the DAMRT with the whole sample

Given the fact that this instrument was developed specifically for this research, it is considered important to examine the reliability results with the whole sample at this point as well. The range of the responses of the DAMRT was good with a Mean of 48.10 (Std Dev. 7.48). The reliability analysis generated an Alpha of .67. Although not very high it can, according to Bartram and Lindley, be judged as an acceptable result.<sup>64</sup> As in the pilot study, question 10c calculated a low item total correlation (.15). Surprisingly, questions 12b and 13 scored even lower (respectively .12 & .06), which was not the case in the pilot study. However, it must be noted that omitting these questions would not drastically improve the overall Alpha score (.68). It seems therefore appropriate to examine the research questions within the context of all the questions of this test. Graph 5 shows that the questionnaire is normally distributed.

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<sup>64</sup> Bartram and Lindley, 2001.



Graph 1: Distribution of DAMRT

The DAMRT is divided into three separate parts; direct cause responsibility, self-regulation responsibility, and continuing responsibility. Table 4 shows that the correlations between sub-scales are all significant at a .05 level.

	Direct cause responsibility	Self-regulation responsibility
Self-regulation responsibility	.404**	1
Continuing responsibility	.169**	.169**

Table 5: Pearson correlation of DAMRT

It is noticeable from this table that the direct cause responsibility and self-regulatory responsibility are the same for continued responsibility. Although it is recognised that this is unusual, a check of the data showed this is a genuine affect.

### 3.7. **Parental Authority Questionnaire**<sup>65</sup>

The PAQ was given to four hundred and five participants. The test was administered during a school lesson. The goal of this test was to establish the perceived parental style at the home of the individual participants. There was sufficient time for all the participants to complete all the questions during a school lesson. Participants were encouraged to read each statement

<sup>65</sup> Referred to as PAQ.

carefully. If they were unable to answer a question or confused, participants were told to omit the question rather than guess an answer. In some groups the test was read to the participants who were less skilled readers.

### 3.7.1. Background to the Parental Authority Questionnaire

Buri has developed a questionnaire that measures Baumrind's parental authority prototypes according to the child's perspective.<sup>66</sup> This instrument can measure the parental style according to the participant's perception. Buri's test consists of 30 items and yields scores for permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting. Since the scores are derived from the appraisals of the adolescent, it must be noted that the results of this test are not as detailed as those provided by the FSP project.<sup>67</sup> This shortcoming is acceptable since the parental styles identified in this study are only used to categorise the participants into groups.

In his article, Buri presents sufficient evidence that his 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' is a valid instrument to measure the parental authority prototypes described by Baumrind.<sup>68</sup> Four phases, which establish the strength of the validity, will be discussed.

During the first phase Buri constructed 48 items to measure parental authority. Twenty-one professional people working in the fields of psychology, education and sociology, and social work were asked to comment on whether these items sufficiently covered the parental style prototypes.<sup>69</sup> During this process 12 items were eliminated when no full agreement could be reached. For measurement purposes it was decided to use only 30 items of the 36 that met the criterion originally set.

During the second phase, Buri conducted two tests to establish the reliability of testing. For test-retest reliability, students from an introductory

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<sup>66</sup> Buri, 1991.

<sup>67</sup> FSP stands for Baumrind's studies gathered from the Family and Socialisation and Developmental Competence Project.

<sup>68</sup> Baumrind, 1971.

<sup>69</sup> This was a mixed gender group (11 women and 10 men).

psychology class were selected.<sup>70</sup> The test was administered with a two-week interval, and the results were as follows:

Parental style	Test- retest reliability
Mother's permissiveness	.81
Mother's authoritarianism	.86
Mother's authoritativeness	.78
Father's permissiveness	.77
Father's authoritarianism	.85
Father's authoritativeness	.92

Table 6: Parental style Test – retest reliability (Source: Buri, 1991)

To test the internal consistency reliability, Buri asked 185 students to complete the questionnaire.<sup>71</sup> With these results the Cronbach (1951) coefficient alpha values were calculated. The scales ranged from .75 for mother's permissiveness to .87 for father's authoritarianism. Both test-retest reliability and the Cronbach alpha coefficients are judged to be very respectable, particularly considering the relatively few questions in the test.

The third phase of the construction of the test focused on validity. In order to establish the level of validity Buri conducted two tests. First, he examined the discriminant-related validity. For this test 127 college students took part and Buri concluded the mother's authoritarianism was inversely related to mother's permissiveness ( $r = .38, p < .0005$ ) as well as to mother's authoritativeness ( $r = .48, p < .0005$ ). A similar result was found between father's authoritarianism and father's permissiveness ( $r = .50, p < .0005$ ) and father's authoritativeness ( $r = .52, p < .0005$ ). Buri also concluded that mother's permissiveness was not significantly related to mother's authoritativeness ( $r = .07, p > .10$ ). Similarly, no significant correlation was found between father's permissiveness and father's authoritativeness ( $r = .12, p > .10$ ). In a third study, Buri considered the criterion-related validity of the Parental Authority Questionnaire. He hypothesised that if his findings were a

<sup>70</sup> Mixed group (30 women and 32 men) with a mean age 19.2.

<sup>71</sup> Mixed gender (95 women and 90 men), mean age 18.7.

valid measure of Baumrind's prototypes, then parental authoritativeness should correlate positively with parental nurturance. Similarly, parental authoritarianism should relate negatively to nurturance and permissiveness should not be significantly related to nurturance. To test this hypothesis Buri used the results of his own tests and those of the Parental Nurturance Scale.<sup>72</sup> Buri concluded that the authoritative parents were found to be highest in parental nurturance for both mothers ( $r = .56, p < .0005$ ) and fathers ( $r = .68, p < .0005$ ). Also, the authoritarian parenting was inversely related to nurturance for both mothers ( $r = .36, p > .0005$ ) and fathers ( $r = .53, p > .0005$ ). Finally, parental permissiveness was not related to nurturance for both mothers ( $r = .04, p > .10$ ) and fathers ( $r = .13, p > .10$ ). The results of these tests concluded that the validity of the Parental Authority Questionnaire is, considering its limitations in relation to the scale of the FSP, a reliable instrument for what it aims to establish.

### 3.7.2. Pilot study of the Parental Authority Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to 36 students. Some of the students struggled somewhat with the wording of the text in various places. Part of this was related to the fact that it was more American than British. This is a noteworthy point, especially since some of the participants completing tests for this research are in lower ability sets. Consequently, the question was raised whether this concern required a re-write of the actual questionnaire. The researcher decided against this, mainly since this comprehension related issue only applies to specific groups and could be easily overcome by reading the questions to the students. The duration of the test was no problem and could easily be combined with the DAMRT in the same lesson. From the following section it is clear that the test did identify the various parental styles.

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<sup>72</sup> Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, and Mueller, 1988.



To analyse the reliability of this instrument the test needs to be divided into the three parenting styles. Each of the categories recorded positive alpha scores; permissiveness (.77), authoritarian (.82), and authoritative (.78). Like Buri, this pilot study found that authoritarianism was inversely related to permissiveness. Also, a significant relationship was found between permissiveness and authoritative parenting. No significant relationship was found between authoritarian and authoritative parenting.

Person Correlation	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative
Permissive	1.000	-.453**	.439**
Sig.		.006	.008
Authoritarian	-.453**	1.000	-.218
Sig.	.006		.202
Authoritative	.439**	-.218	1.000
Sig.	.008	.202	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed)

*Table 7: Correlations Parental Authority Questionnaire*

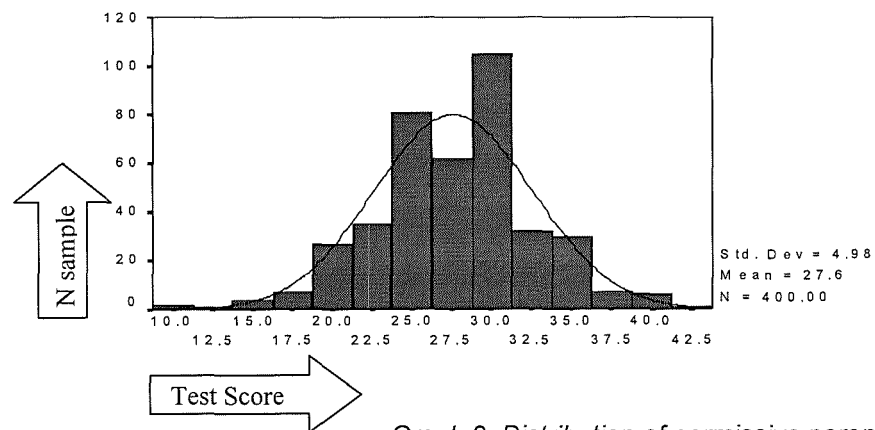
In conclusion, the pilot study of the PAQ was successful in the sense that the limited sample generated sufficiently comparable results with the original test conducted by Buri to justify the use of this instrument for the present study. However, it must be noted that some of the wording in the questionnaire is likely to confuse students with a lower than their age reading level. The researcher will take this into account and read the test (and explain where relevant) to those students who might not comprehend the full meaning of some questions.

### 3.7.3. Reliability of the Parental Authority Questionnaire in the present sample

The PAQ measures the relative presence of three different parental styles as perceived by the adolescent participants. To examine the reliability of this test with the present sample, it is best evaluated by taking the total

number of responses and allocating them to the three separate parental styles (permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative). The instrument has 10 questions for each parental style forming, in essence, three separate sections.<sup>73</sup> Each of these sections generated a good spread with respective means of 27.61 (SD 4.98), 29.13 (SD 6.49), and 36.44 (SD 5.45) (total n = 400). The Alpha scores measured were; permissive sub-scale .62, authoritarian sub-scale .76, and authoritative sub-scale .76. Given the permissive Alpha scores were on the low side in this sample, the researcher will accept the outcomes of this sub-group with care, in line with Bartram and Lindley's findings.<sup>74</sup> Possible reasons for this lower score might be related to ethnic background where Asians understand specific questions about permissiveness differently. Also, from the point of the teacher role, it was interesting to note that a higher proportion of the less able students scored their parents to be permissive. A possible reason for this score could therefore be related to poorer reading skills. However, the researcher has not the instruments available to measure the exact extent of these possible effects in depth within the present research context. In other words, even though this sub-group is accepted for this study the researcher does this with caution, accepting possible limitations to findings including this variable.

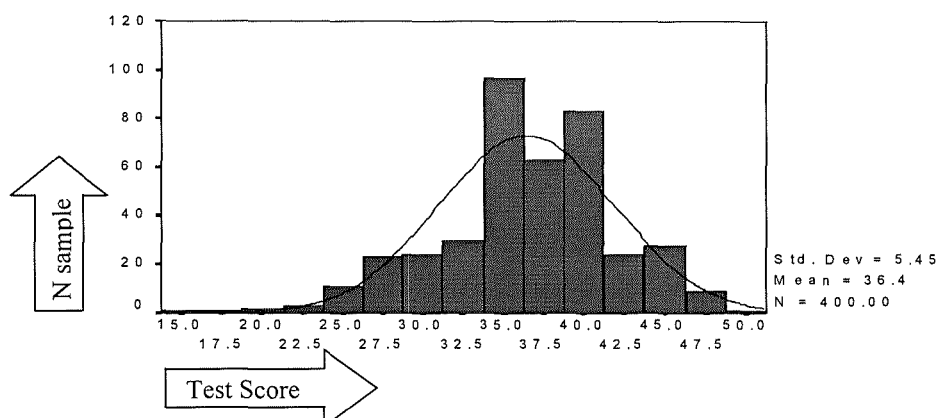
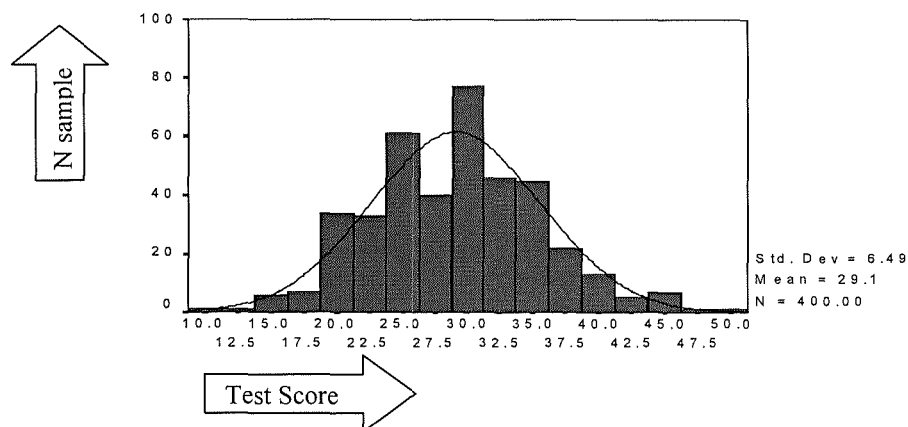
Graphs 2 - 4 show that the questionnaire is normally distributed:



Graph 2: Distribution of permissive parenting style

<sup>73</sup> The reader can find an example of this test in Appendix D. Statements 1, 6, 10, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, and 28 are indicative of the permissive parental style. Statements 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, 16, 18, 25, 26, and 29 are indicative of the authoritarian parental style. Statements 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 27 and 30 are indicative of the authoritative parental style.

<sup>74</sup> Bartram and Lindley, 2001.



As can be seen in Table 10, the three parts of the 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' show a significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) between authoritarian and permissive parents. This does confirm the reliability of the test since these two parental scales are on opposite sides of the spectrum.

	Permissive	Authoritarian
Authoritarian	-.242**	
Authoritative	.030	.060

Table 8: Pearson correlation of parental styles

It is noticed that the effect sizes of the correlations is different from the pilot study. This is probably due to the small size of the pilot sample and therefore producing less reliable result. The reader is reminded that the pilot

sample is only one age group whereas the full sample covers three years groups.

Controlling for age and gender made no significant difference to the correlation matrix or level of significance ( $r_{\text{permissive.authoritarian}} = -.245$ ,  $r_{\text{permissive.authoritative}} = .032$ ,  $r_{\text{authoritarian.authoritative}} = .073$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that the observed correlations are not due to gender and age.

### **3.8. *Research phase two, the structured interview.***

In this part of the research a structured interview was conducted to explore the participants' justifications for fairness and moral responsibility judgement. The basis for this interview was formed by the answers provided in the DAMRT.

#### **3.8.1. Background to the moral responsibility judgement interview**

The aim of this interview is to explore patterns of justifications for fairness. Particular attention is given to the expectation that participants of Asian background will express such justifications in a different way from white participants. The researcher considered whether an interview or questionnaire was the best possible setting for gathering this data of justification of fairness and moral responsibility. Several reasons provide the basis for the decision of the interview setting rather than another questionnaire. First, it is often suggested that the response rate of the interview is better.<sup>75</sup> In the case of this research, there is less difficulty in getting participants to answer questions, since the context of a school allows such a framework. Rather, by inviting participants to take part in an interview there is a greater sense of participation and motivation. It was clear that interviewing participants highlighted their ability to participate, and consequently filtered out those who were unable to answer the questions

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<sup>75</sup> Oppenheim, 1992.

seriously. Second, it was easier to explain the specific goals of this phase of data gathering. As was evident from the first phase of the research that there were several participants who had reading difficulties. However, it was clear that they had no major problems with understanding the text once it was read to them. Third, the interview provided the researcher with a better tool to appreciate subtle but potentially significant differences between the participants. This is particularly the case in relation to the ethnicity variable. By interacting with these differences the researcher not only sought to extract relevant concepts between the cultural backgrounds, but also saw that this could provide him with relevant information for the more specific probing during the in depth-interview in research phase three.

### 3.8.2. Sampling method

For this phase of the research a stratified sample method was chosen, the reason being that by selecting the participants the research gained a better balance of the overall sample, giving representative importance to the various key variables in this study. A total of 106 participants were selected for this interview. Selection of the participants was based on:

- Score in the DAMRT
- Parental Authority Questionnaire
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age (Year 9, 10, or 11)

The following table shows the breakdown of the various groups. It must be noted that not all the moral levels in relation to parental style and gender could be equally represented since there were not enough participants with the various scores. For example, within the category scores of moral responsibility smaller than a score of 41, most participants were white and predominately male. At the other end of the scale, the Asian participants had scored higher and are therefore more represented. However, where possible the researcher has tried to choose participants from different ethnic background as much as possible. The breakdown of moral score was purely on the basis of dividing the total group. There is no special significance for choosing five points or ten points except that by doing so the researcher was

in a better position to be more precise in the selection process and therefore aim for a more balanced sample of the whole population. Table 5 shows the distribution of the moral score, parental style, gender, and ethnicity.

Moral Score	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Total
< 41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 White Male</li> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>0 Asian Female</li> </ul>
41 – 45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 White Male</li> <li>4 White Female</li> <li>3 Asian Male</li> <li>1 Asian Female</li> </ul>
46 – 50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Male</li> <li>1 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 White Male</li> <li>3 White Female</li> <li>4 Asian Male</li> <li>5 Asian Female</li> </ul>
51 – 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>1 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>1 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 White Male</li> <li>4 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Male</li> <li>4 Asian Female</li> </ul>
56 – 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 White Male</li> <li>8 White Female</li> <li>3 Asian Male</li> <li>4 Asian Female</li> </ul>
61 – 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 White Male</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>1 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 White Male</li> <li>3 White Female</li> <li>4 Asian Male</li> <li>3 Asian Female</li> </ul>
> 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Male</li> <li>1 Asian Male</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 White Male</li> <li>2 Asian Male</li> <li>3 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>2 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 White Male</li> <li>2 White Female</li> <li>3 Asian Male</li> <li>7 Asian Female</li> </ul>
Total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 White Male</li> <li>9 White Female</li> <li>5 Asian Male</li> <li>9 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 White Male</li> <li>6 White Female</li> <li>8 Asian Male</li> <li>8 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 White Male</li> <li>11 White Female</li> <li>7 Asian Male</li> <li>7 Asian Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 White Male</li> <li>26 White Female</li> <li>20 Asian Male</li> <li>24 Asian Female</li> </ul>
Total	34	32	35	101

Table 9: Overview interview table Phase 2

As can be seen above, parental style groups were fairly equally represented. It must be noted, however, that the white population is bigger than the Asian population. This was due to the fact that there were not enough Asian participants to fit the specific categories. The result of this is that overall, thirteen more white than Asians participants were interviewed. With regard to gender the balance is very good. The above table does not show the age levels of the participant. However, there is a good ratio between the various Year Groups with 35 participants from Year 11, 32 participants from Year 10 and 34 participants from Year 9.

### 3.8.3. Location of interview

Given the number of interviews the researcher had chosen two locations for the interview. About two-third of the participants were happy to do the interview directly after school while the rest preferred to answer the questions at home. Both locations had their advantages and disadvantages. For example, although certainly not characteristic of all the interviews, at the school, some were at times a little too rushed because the participants wanted to go home. This issue was not a problem when the interview was done at the home of the participant, but there the issue of privacy became an obstacle. This was particularly the case with Asian families. It seemed that the cultural rules of hospitality expected a parent or another family member to be present at the interview. With most of the participants this did not really seem to affect them (in a few cases the English of the parent was poor, which might have enabled the participant to say whatever they would have said anyway). However, a couple of times the 'good child' attitude was quite apparent and questions might have been answered in a different way if the participant had not been under the watchful eye of their parent. But it is important to note that this was the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the environment can have a significant influence on the quality and validity of the data. Therefore, the research sought to complete as many of the interviews as possible at school, and when a home visit was preferred he explicitly inquired if it would be possible to conduct the interview somewhere with a reasonable level of privacy.

#### 3.8.4. Construction of the interview

The interview was constructed after ten participants representative of the larger sample were asked to take part in an exploratory interview. Most of these participants were individuals who had completed the DAMRT but, through absence, failed to complete the other questionnaires and therefore their data were not suitable for further analysis. The researcher ensured that participants of the various different ethnic backgrounds were represented in this open interview. Also, he endeavoured to select participants who were considered confident enough to express their own thinking in an articulate manner. The key objective of the interview was twofold. First, it aimed to record the reasoning of the fairness judgements in relation to their moral responsibility. Great care was given to probe the participant to explain why they had come to this conclusion as well as ask them to clarify how this influenced their level of moral responsibility in the various situations. Attention was given to the type of answers that seemed to contain a level of contradiction. In such instances participants were invited to clarify why their answers were different. Further, the researcher would explore the role and influence of other individuals in each situation. This was not so much to change the context of the various case studies in the DAMRT but more to uncover a clearer picture of the sense of moral responsibility in relation to age and status within the family structure. When appropriate, the participants were asked if they felt that cultural expectations played a significant role in their decision process. If so, such expectations were perceived to shape their moral level of responsibility. The role of brother and sister responsibility as well as parental expectations were given particular attention.

Second, the researcher gave specific consideration to the actual wording of the participants' answers. This was particularly important for the formulation of the different answers on the interview sheet. The researcher has aimed to write those so that the answers given during this pilot phase would be as close as possible to the actual thoughts and reasons given by the participants. The aim was to keep the answers as short as possible. To ensure that answers were relevant to the target group the researcher discussed the various possible options for a given answer with the



participants, and explored which they felt best summarised their answer. This interview was not recorded but detailed notes were taken during the interview. Most of the participants were very willing to discuss their understanding of fairness and moral responsibility. Most of the participants were able to explain how they had come to these decisions and could remember what they were thinking while filling out the actual questionnaire.

### 3.8.5. Pilot study of the interview during phase two

The first version of the interview answers was used in a pilot with twenty participants. It was ensured that this sample consisted of participants across all three Year Groups, gender and ethnicity. Given the nature of the tool, it was actually possible to enter most of the data gathered during these interviews for the actual data analysed for the research. In a few instances participants came up with responses unlike any already recorded. When considered appropriate, these were added to the list of answers. Also, it was concluded that in a couple of cases the wording was insufficiently clear and in need of improvement. After this round of interviews the final interview format was drawn up. Subsequent, unanticipated responses were recorded as 'other'.

All the answers were coded with an individual number which were compiled in a spreadsheet. This document was entered into an SPSS programme to analyse the data.

## 3.9. *Phase three, the focus interview*

The final phase of this study is qualitative in nature. The research method selected to examine the participants' thoughts, experiences and feelings in relation to the development of moral responsibility at home is a focus interview. Historically this research method is rooted in sociology. It gained particular significance through the work of Merton and Kendall.<sup>76</sup> A focus interview is distinguished in the sense that it seeks to combine the non-directive and specific approach of two types of interviews together. By doing

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<sup>76</sup> Merton and Kendall, 1946.

so, it aims to maximise an environment of directed openness. In short, the focus interview can be summarised by the following three characteristics. First, each participant taking part in the interview must have knowledge of and, most importantly, must be able to reflect on experiences that are key aspects of the research project. Second, the interview questions are based on prior research and seek to test a set of hypotheses. Finally, the construction and style of the interview is such that subjective experiences and reactions of the participant take centre stage.

The advantage of this type of interview is twofold. On the one hand, it allows the researcher to be selective in creating a clear framework of questions and zoom in on a particular area of interest. On the other hand, it provides a context for the interviewee to comment, reflect and explain specific individual circumstances, i.e. tell their own story. It is exactly the strength of this combination which Merton and Kendall argue puts the researcher in a unique position to yield 'significant data'.<sup>77</sup> However, a note of caution is relevant at this point. Since much emphasis is placed on emotions/feelings, the success, arguably the level of 'significant data', of the interview depends heavily on the interviewee's ability to describe and evaluate the experiences examined. This, of course, is influenced by the interviewer's skills to guide the interview effectively. Examination of the data must therefore take into account the overall flow of the interview and in particular the perceived openness of the interviewee.

### 3.9.1. Design of the focus interview

Given the different variables in this study, this interview covers various research interests. Consequently, this interview guide is not a typical 'funnel design'<sup>78</sup> simply because the various strands of this research (moral conflict discussion, parental style, culture/ethnicity) make that impossible. Nevertheless much thought has gone into the construction of the interview, seeking an overall progression from general to specific. For example, Chapter 2 discussed that the term 'morality' is used in a range of different

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<sup>77</sup> Merton and Kendall, 1946, pp. 541 – 557.

<sup>78</sup> Morgan, 1998, p.53.

contexts. Hence the interview starts with the aim of establishing a workable definition of the term. Besides setting this essential backdrop to the overall discussion, it also allows the interviewee to settle into the interview. From the interviewer's point of view, it provides him with the first indications as to how the term moral responsibility is perceived. Such signposts are important since it enables the interviewer to take note of new insights or uncover unanticipated issues. This is achieved by using a set of cards with different moral issues.<sup>79</sup> It was found that the cards create a helpful context to probe for answers in relation to specific moral areas later in the interview. To maximise the outcome during this introductory phase of the interview, the interviewer minimises his involvement.

Keeping in mind the sensitivity of the topic, it was paramount that the questions were designed in a manner that communicate respect yet invite the interviewees to express in real terms how they understand and experience the development of their moral responsibility. To illustrate this, section 4 and 5<sup>80</sup> are a point in case. First the interviewee is asked to comment on any 'responsibility discussion' which is then used as a basis to move on to the issue of 'moral conflict'. This gradual process of zooming in on specifics is judged essential. Not least to help the interviewee explore and formulate his own thoughts and experiences. Additionally, it provides opportunities to display respect for shared observations and reflections as well as a 'natural' way to probe further for specific information. Consequently the interviewer takes at this stage of the research a much more directive approach, concentrating on identified aspects of the research interest.

The process of designing the questions for the interview was particularly aided by talking to several people of Asian background in order to help establish culture specific issues and developing the relevant probes. Since participants interviewed are predominantly 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, acculturation to UK society is high but it was also recognised that this level was possibly affected by their faith as well as country of origin. Understanding of moral

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<sup>79</sup> See appendix F, section 2 lists the cards used to set the scene for the interview.

<sup>80</sup> See Appendix F. 4. Moral discussion (Interview generated example). 5. Moral discussion (Understanding moral conflict / parental gender).

issues which might be difficult to talk about were also discussed. A clear understanding of these matters is paramount in order to create the best possible context for an open discussion.

### 3.9.2. Sampling method

For this phase of the research the stratified sample method is chosen, the reason being that this approach most closely targets the various variables of interest to the research questions. By doing so, accuracy is improved and the result is more representative. Selection was therefore based on:

- Score in the DAMRT
- Parental Authority Questionnaire
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age (Year 9, 10, or 11)

As can be seen in Table 6 a total of 35 students were selected, twelve for each parental style group, with six boys and six girls (equally divided ethnicity). To spread the different levels of the moral responsibility the total score range was divided into seven sub-groups. Each group consists of five points in the DAMRT. Although a perfect match was not possible with this sample, Table 6 shows each category is represented fairly. Where a preferred match was unrealisable it was ensured that this was balanced with the categories directly next to it. For example, the 4 participants in subgroup 56 – 60 are sandwiched by 6 participants on either side.

Moral score	Total	Moral Score	Total	Moral score	Total
< 41	5	51 – 55	6	> 65	5
41 – 45	5	56 – 60	4		
46 – 50	6	61 – 65	6		

Table 10: Distribution Moral responsibility scores

Table 11, below, shows the distribution of the variables (parental style, ethnicity, gender, moral responsibility scores and age) across the sample. Due to scores in previous questionnaires, a perfect spread of all these variables across each individual year group was impossible. First priority was

given to parental style, ethnicity and age with the result that moral responsibility scores and age are at times slightly less balanced in each year group. However, this should not be considered to be a major weakness of the study, since results in phase one conclude a close match across the various year groups.

Year	Authoritative	Moral Resp. Score	Authoritarian	Moral Resp. Score	Permissive	Moral Resp. score
9						
	English male	62	English male	49	English male	46
	Asian male	62	Asian male	44	X	
	White female	51	White female	39	White female	40
	Asian female	49	Asian female	53	Asian female	55
10						
	English male	45	English male	63	English male	57
	Asian male	52	Asian male	52	Asian male	25
					Asian male	42
	White female	56	White female	55	White female	57
					White female	45
	Asian female	65	Asian female	70	X	
11						
	English male	39	English male	51	English male	35
	Asian male	66	Asian male	68	Asian male	60
	White female	52	White female	43	X	
	Asian female	66	Asian female	66	Asian female	63
					Asian female	48

Table 11: Overview interview table Phase 3

### 3.9.3. Location of the interview

Given the privacy concerns that became an issue with some isolated cases during the interviews in Phase two, the researcher decided that the school was best suited for the focus interviews. In that way privacy could be guaranteed which was particularly significant for the Asian population. Also, since the interview was recorded, interruptions were less likely. Finally, if the school environment had some minor negative influence this would affect the whole sample. One such influence could be that the interview was associated with staying behind for a detention. It is at this stage important to mention that the selection of the participants included, where possible, those with a high level of commitment to take part in this research project. For example, some participants had inquired repeatedly about the progress of the research and were eager to help in whatever way they could. If prior data put such individuals in a target group they were selected above others with a comparable data context. This was meaningful information because it was important that the participant was prepared to give the relevant time to complete the entire interview.

### 3.9.4. Coding the data generated by the focus interview

Flick points out that the interpretation of data is at the very core of the qualitative research.<sup>81</sup> It is important to follow a strategy which not only allows the researcher to understand the data but also does it in such a manner that it is considered to be reliable and can be copied by others so that research findings can be verified. The strategy used in this study is one that seeks to code the material with the aim to categorise it or to construct a theory and is therefore called 'theory coding'. This procedure was introduced by Glaser and Strauss<sup>82</sup> and subsequently developed further by Glaser, Strauss, and Strauss and Corbin.<sup>83</sup> Key to the grounded theory is the understanding that interpretation of the data should always take place within the context of the sampling material. The steps by which this process is governed are termed

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<sup>81</sup> Flick, 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 1967.

<sup>83</sup> Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990.

'open coding', 'axial coding', and 'selective coding'.<sup>84</sup> Flick points out that these stages should not be seen as clearly distinguishable procedures but more a way of handling data 'between which the researcher moves back and forth'.<sup>85</sup>

Following the guidelines for this type of coding the researcher developed a set of codes to analyse the data of the thirty-five interviews. The codes were recorded in Excel, which provided the researcher with clear overviews in relation to scores of individual questions. It also enabled him to compare scores of one part of the interview with scores in other parts and thus explore certain patterns or concepts within the sample. As is pointed out above, the analysis was very much a dynamic process. The first involved creating an overall picture that in turn raised several questions on specific issues. This then became the basis for going back to the original text, often with a different set of codes to analyse the various concepts of interest more thoroughly or from a different angle. Where the written record of the interview was unclear or incomplete, the researcher went back to the taped version of the actual interview. In this way he was able to ascertain quotes of the participants that illustrated particular points relevant for the research. All participants were given a code for further reference. For example, 'P311.29MW'. All codes start with P3, referring to (research) Phase 3. The second number is 9, 10, or 11. This refers to the Year Group the participant is part of. The number after the full stop is the individual number of each participant and therefore only known to the researcher for privacy reasons. Finally, the participant has the letters 'M' or 'F' and 'W' or 'A'. This stands for gender ('M' = male or 'F' = female) and ethnicity ('W' = white and 'A' = Asian).

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<sup>84</sup> 'Open coding' aims at expressing data and phenomena in the form of concepts. 'Axial coding' seeks to define and differentiate the categories resulting from open coding. 'Selective coding' continues the axial coding at a higher level abstraction while aiming to understand the core issues of the data bank.

<sup>85</sup> Flick, 2002, p. 177.

### 3.9.5. The Developmental Environment Coding System<sup>86</sup>

This instrument is a very detailed tool to code speech patterns. The DECS is normally used for conversations between parents and their adolescent children. The conversation is recorded, either on tape or video, and then transcribed. Each speech can then be coded and analysed. In this study the researcher uses the instrument by coding the speech patterns as they are perceived by the adolescent participant. In other words, it is their reflection on the moral discussion or argument at home. Powers developed this instrument to directly observe family discussion interactions, aiming to gain a better understanding of the effect of social behaviour upon moral behaviour.<sup>87</sup> As discussed in the Literacy Review, Powers based her work on studies conducted by Berkowitz and Gibbs, Holstein, Parikh, and Stanley.<sup>88</sup> Central to these studies is the assumption that opportunities for role-taking experiences are essential to stimulating the adolescent's moral development and an important encouragement to help him participate in the group decision process.<sup>89</sup> The effect of such moral growth is clearly linked to the nature of the cognitive conflict.<sup>90</sup> It goes without saying that the context for such a conflict is influential. Therefore, in the DECS a clear distinction is made between constructive and non-constructive controversies.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Referred to as DECS.

<sup>87</sup> Powers, 1982, 1988.

<sup>88</sup> Berkowitz and Gibbs, 1983; Holstein, 1973; Parikh, 1980; Stanley, 1980. Both Holstein and Stanley demonstrated that parental encouragement of their children in a family conflict discussion significantly advanced the moral development of their children.

<sup>89</sup> This assumption, of course, is rooted primarily in Kohlberg's work as discussed in the earlier chapter. Kohlberg argued that an individual's ability to take the role of another person is fundamental in the development of moral reasoning. Role-taking experiences are essential in this process because it provides the adolescent with an opportunity to understand better another person's perspective. This in turn could possibly create an internal cognitive disequilibrium, the second fundamental 'ingredient' of moral development.

<sup>90</sup> Powers defines cognitive conflict as 'the simultaneous existence of two incompatible ideas within an individual's mind that must be reconciled.' 1982, p. 97.

<sup>91</sup> Powers refers here to the work done by Johnson, 1962, 1967.



### 3.9.5.1. Procedure

There are two ways data can be gathered, either by video or audio-tape. Most participants preferred the session to be taped rather than recorded on video. Powers produced an extensive list of transcribing guidelines that set out the format for coding the family conflict discussion (see Appendix G).<sup>92</sup> These guidelines to code the various speeches were followed.<sup>93</sup> At least one code is given to each speech.<sup>94</sup> The first level of coding is called the functional definition, meaning it designates the intended goal of the speech within the context of the family conflict discussion. The codes in this first level are; focusing behaviour, challenging behaviour, sharing perspectives, support, avoidance, distortion, rejection, and affective behaviour. Each of these codes will be briefly described later. A second level of coding is referred to as the mode of speech.<sup>95</sup> It signifies whether the speech is competitive or non-competitive. The DECS has added one mode to this, namely, the conflictual mode. This was included to identify those speeches that 'were indicative of a destructive level of defensiveness, hostility, attack, or rejection.'<sup>96</sup> A third level of coding is the transactive and nontransactive behaviour. This relates to the type of behaviour that displays the ability or lack thereof, to understand and value the conflicting reasoning of the other individual.<sup>97</sup> It must be noted that not all speeches that are considered to be constructive for development are inevitably transactive.<sup>98</sup> Finally, the fourth level of coding is content. This falls into three categories; reasoning about the moral dilemma, defining or commenting upon the nature

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<sup>92</sup> Powers (1982, p. 99), notes that there are undoubtedly limits to using the typed transcripts as the basis for coding the family conflict discussion. Certain aspects of the conversation (voice pace or tone of voice) are 'lost'. However, given the complexity of such an undertaking and the probability of lack of clarity, as well as the richness of data provided, it seems worth the risk of eliminating some factors.

<sup>93</sup> Powers (1982, p. 100) defines a speech as 'all the words spoken by a single speaker from the time he starts to speak until he stops.'

<sup>94</sup> This is unlike the coding system developed by Berkowitz and Gibbs (1983) who only coded a speech when they considered it to fit their definition of transaction behaviour. The advantage of Powers' method is that her coding system includes variables that interfere with the moral development of an adolescent.

<sup>95</sup> This originally was a term 'developed' and used by Berkowitz and Gibbs, 1983.

<sup>96</sup> Powers, 1982, p. 105.

<sup>97</sup> Unlike Berkowitz and Gibbs (1983), who coded only transactive behaviour, Powers' DECS wants to highlight both the positive as well as the negative types of behaviour influencing moral development.

<sup>98</sup> Powers' illustrates this point by speeches that 'clearly focus the nature and purpose of the discussion but do not deal with any discussant reasoning.' Powers, 1982, p. 106.

of the task provided, and commenting on the interpersonal process or individual behaviour in the discussion.<sup>99</sup> As Powers points out, the advantage of coding the content of each speech is that it makes it possible to examine when and how certain types of speeches are used during the duration of the family conflict discussion. For example, does the adolescent display avoidance behaviour when the discussion centres on reasoning or interpersonal process? If so, why is this the preferred type of behaviour?

#### 3.9.5.2. Functional definition

As already mentioned, this category falls into eight larger separate conceptual categories; focusing behaviour, challenging others, sharing perspectives, support, avoidance, distortion, rejection, and affective conflict. For clarity's sake it is useful to list here the table printed in Powers' doctoral dissertation.<sup>100</sup> Each of these will then be discussed briefly. A complete definition and examples of each code can be found in DECS manual (Appendix G).

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<sup>99</sup> Powers, 1982, p. 106.

<sup>100</sup> Powers, 1982, p. 108.

Categories and codes	Mode	Transactive- ness
A. Focusing		
1. Paraphrase	NC	T
2. Comprehension check	NC	T
3. Intent for closure	NC	NT
B. Challenging		
4. Competitive clarification	C	T
5. Critique	C	T
6. Competitive request	C	T
7. Counter consideration	C	T
8. Refinement / concession	C	T
9. Competitive opinion statement	C	NT
10. Request for change	C	NT
11. Simple disagreement	C	NT
C. Sharing perspective		
12. Opinion statement	NC	NT
13. Clarification	NC	T
14. Request	NC	T
15. Simple agreement	NC	NT
D. Avoidance		
16. Distracting	CF	NT
E. Rejecting		
17. Refusal to do request or task	CF	NT
18. Quit / Devalue	CF	NT
F. Distortion		
19. Distortion	CF	NT
G. Support		
20. Encouragement	NC	NT
21. Non-competitive humour	NC	NT
22. Listening responses	NC	NT
H. Affective conflict		
23. Actively resist or threaten	CF	NT
24. Devalue / hostility	CF	NT
I. Codes with no category		
25. Interrupted / incomplete statements		
26. Unclear		

Table 12: Overview speech codes

These categories and codes will be discussed in eight groups, namely; 1) Focusing behaviour, 2) Challenging others, 3) Sharing perspectives, 4) Support, 5) Avoidance, 6) Distortion, 7) Rejection, and 8) Affective conflict.

First, focusing behaviours. These are the types of speeches, which display agreement or disagreement between the individual members of the group. Also, speeches that have a summary type function and thereby focus the interviewees on statements made earlier or check that a statement was understood correctly. Finally, focusing behaviours are displayed when an attempt is made to bring a discussion to a fitting close. As pointed out earlier, one of Powers' goals for designing the DECS was to examine whether 'a constructive context for controversy was necessary for stimulating cognitive conflict.'<sup>101</sup> One of the requirements of a constructive context is the discussant's competence to clearly express his thoughts and perspectives, whether these are positive or negative.<sup>102</sup> A focused and respectful discussion atmosphere is key for the constructive context sought after.

Second, challenging others.<sup>103</sup> All eight codes in this category are competitive in nature but do not create a heated conflict. It rather shows that the discussant can hold his own ground in relation to other arguments presented and can evaluate and appreciate other viewpoints without feeling the need (pressure) to agree with them. Of the eight codes, five are understood to be transactive because it requires the discussants to communicate their own thoughts and perspectives clearly.

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<sup>101</sup> Powers, 1982, p. 109.

<sup>102</sup> It must be noted that types of speeches are not considered to be competitive but mainly restate a position rather than seek to challenge them.

<sup>103</sup> It includes 'all codes which signify that the intent of speech is to be a) defend or refine one's own position against another's criticism; b) critique another's reasoning; c) request a change in another's reasoning or behaviour; or d) to register simple disagreement with another.' Powers, 1982, p. 109. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

Third, the DECS codes the category sharing perspectives<sup>104</sup>. This category includes also exploring the perspectives of other individuals.<sup>105</sup> The central issue of this category is that it identifies the discussants' behaviour that is considered to be essential to clear expression of differences and synthesis of these positions. Therefore, such behaviours are seen to be fundamental for creating a constructive controversy. These codes also highlight whether or not attempts are made to understand or explore another individual's ideas and perspective. Through analyses of the data generated by this category, the researcher can establish how far an adolescent has the skills to explore another individual's perspectives, especially so when parental encouragement to explore their perspectives is provided.

Fourth, support. All the codes in this category are non-competitive and are not transactive, but fulfil an important role to support the individual to be engaged with other members of the discussion group.<sup>106</sup>

Fifth, the DECS codes avoidance behaviour.<sup>107</sup> In order to understand other individuals' perspectives one needs to be prepared to discuss and explore the reasons for disagreements as they arise between different people. If one or more discussants actually avoid this process, internal cognitive conflict cannot be fostered.

Sixth, distortion. A speech receives this code when the discussant misrepresents what another individual has said, or wrongly understands the purpose or nature of the task.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> This codes in this category cover speeches where the speaker 'a) states, elaborates upon, or clarifies his or her opinion; b) gives information permanent to the task; c) justifies the psychological process he or she went through to arrives at their solution to the dilemma; or d) expresses simple agreement.' Powers, 1982, p.109. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

<sup>105</sup> For example, 'a) requesting others' opinions or a clarification of another's reasoning; or b) integrating two viewpoints.' Powers, 1982, p. 109. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

<sup>106</sup> Speeches in this code include, 'a) praise another person's reasoning behaviour; b) give a simple statement of encouragement or an indication that they are listening to another's statement; c) provide non-competitive humour.' Powers, 1982, p. 111. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

<sup>107</sup> There is only one code in this category. It identifies the speeches that distract from the conversation or task at hand. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

<sup>108</sup> There is only one code in this category. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

Seventh, the category of affective conflict.<sup>109</sup> Each of the codes in this category is conflictual in nature and it is not transactive. The relevance of the codes in this category is particularly interesting when the researcher wants to examine whether conditions for constructive controversy are met.<sup>110</sup>

Finally, the DECS has two codes to identify rejective behaviour.<sup>111</sup> Although in some ways similar to avoidance, rejection is understood to be a much stronger statement of intolerance. Since the DECS seeks to code all speeches two extra codes with no category are included. First, the speeches that are unclear to the transcriber are coded as unintelligible responses. Second, the speeches which are incomplete statements (or statements whose meaning cannot be understood) are therefore coded as non-category codes. It is obvious that these two latter codes are not useful for the empirical analysis.

#### 3.9.5.3. Reliability of the DECS

The reliability of the DECS was tested in three ways.<sup>112</sup> First, Pearson product moment correlations of agreement on the total number of times a code or category was given in an entire family discussion were calculated. Second, percentages of exact agreement on each speech within a discussion were determined. Finally, a calculation of the kappa statistic for exact speech by speech agreement were made.<sup>113</sup> Powers examined this in four ways. First, reliability for functional definition categories, with the percent agreement were ranging from .84 to .98 (Kappa .63 to .71). Powers points out that as

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<sup>109</sup> In this category speeches are identified that are; 'a) blatantly hostile attempts to attack another's personality or reasoning; b) sarcastic remarks; c) hostile attempts at self-defence; d) undermining or devaluing of another person; e) threats of punishment or misbehaviour; f) attempts to resist the participation of another person; or g) defending one member's behaviour to another family member. Powers, 1982, p. 111. See also Appendix G for further explanation and examples.

<sup>110</sup> This obviously refers to the discussant's ability to discuss and explore differences without raising defensive affective conflict.

<sup>111</sup> These codes identify the speeches that 'show refusal to do the task, undermining the devaluing of the task, or attempt to close the discussion before different perspectives have been explored.' Powers, 1982, p. 112.

<sup>112</sup> Powers, 1982, pp. 112 – 114.

<sup>113</sup> The kappa statistic is only used as a form of reference. It must be pointed out that this test of reliability is a much more rigorous calculation than the other two, since kappa adjusts for the amount of agreement which might be due to chance. As a result, this test usually has lower result than those obtained by percent agreement calculations.

'interpreted by Landis and Koch ratings all these kappas fall within the range of "substantial" reliability'.<sup>114</sup> Second, percent agreement and kappa was calculated for the functional definition categories. All the kappa scores obtained rated from moderate to very good (all percent agreements .85 or higher). Third, transactiveness and non-transactiveness: the kappa rates of .66 for both categories are concluded to be 'substantial' reliability (percent agreements are .85 and .86). Finally, reliability was calculated for content categories. Kappas ranging from .45 to .53 (percent agreement from .84 to .96) were rated as moderate.

### 3.9.6 Pilot study of the interview in phase three

Although pilot testing is essential to all research, there is a sense in which such a trial run presents special problems with focus interviews. Krueger explains that this difficulty is particularly due to the fact that interview and environment are hard to separate.<sup>115</sup> Careful wording and structuring of the interview questions, as well as the general approach of the interviewer help to avoid such a situation but one cannot ignore that, by the very nature of this type of research, there is only a limited amount of control. In other words, one individual interviewee can 'colour' an interview in such a way that an unfavourable climate is created which results in unanswered questions. For example, there might be a sense of fear of expressing one's feelings or experiences. The pilot stage covers, therefore, a range of steps. First, as already mentioned above, the researcher discussed and tested several of his interview areas with people of different ethnic backgrounds and levels of expertise. Second, the wording and general flow of the interview were discussed with people with interview expertise. Third, the actual interview was piloted with students of the target group. They gave feedback on specific points such as probes, clarity and level of sensitivity discussed. All these various stages contributed to changes to the original design, resulting in a clearer and more effective tool to guide the interview.

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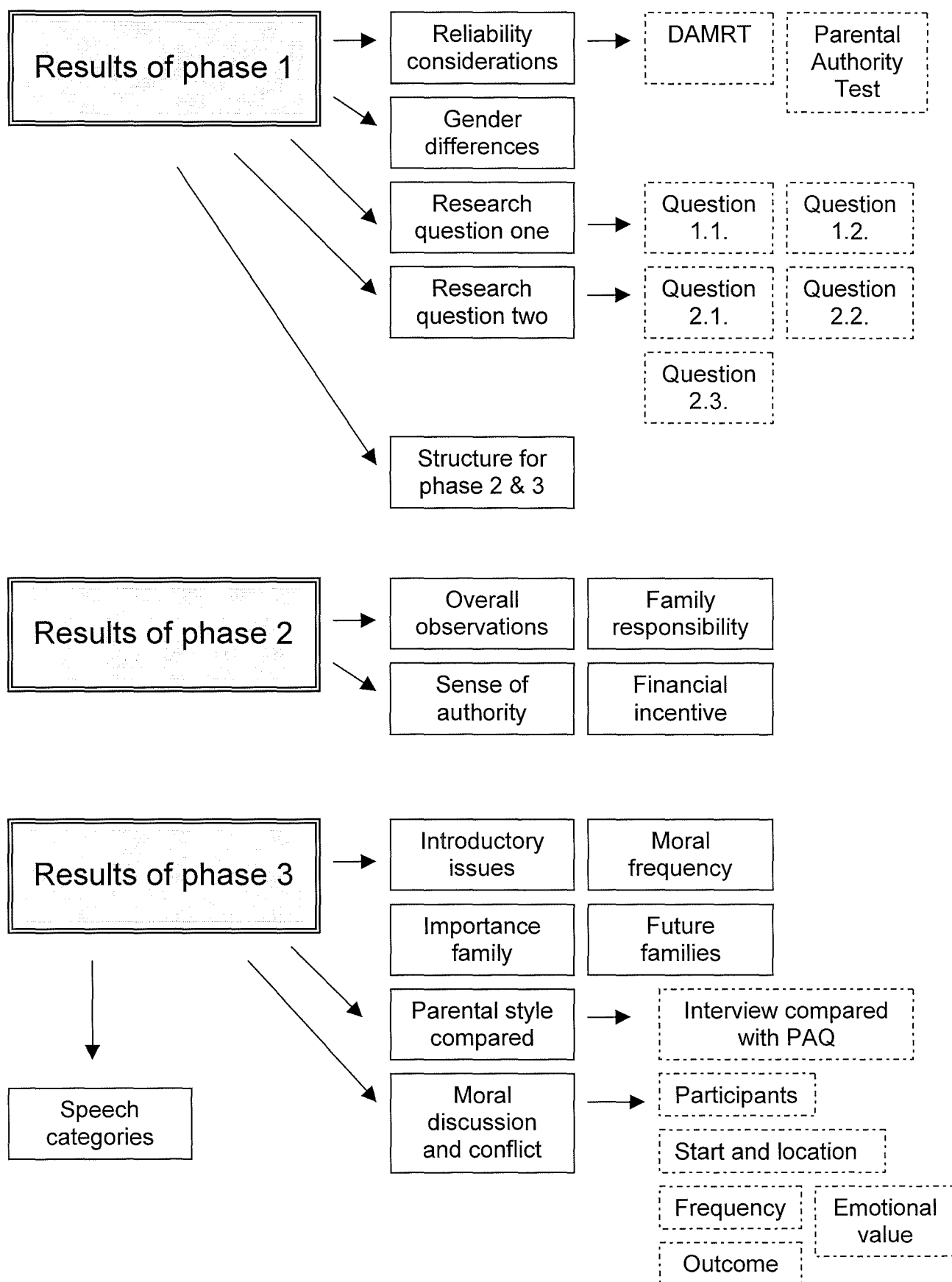
<sup>114</sup> Powers, 1988. p. 118.

<sup>115</sup> Krueger, 1998. Developing questions for focus groups, p. 57.

# Results



## Schematic overview Results Chapter



## 4. Results

### 4.1. Results of the Phase 1

*In this section the results of three questionnaires are discussed. These instruments were the first tests given to the participants and are the; 'Defining Issues Test', DAMRT and 'Parental Authority Questionnaire'. The Year 9, 10 and 11 (total N = 405) students completed the questionnaires during two separate lessons.*

Since the questionnaires were given during a two-week period, some students were not able to finish all three tests due to absence. Given the importance of both the DAMRT and 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' for the research questions, completion of these questionnaires took priority. Also, the 'Defining Issues Test' was written for participants with a minimum reading age of 13 years old and consequently it proved too challenging for students of the lower ability sets. The researcher observed while working with borderline class-sets, that the American 'flavour' of the instrument and lack of sustained concentration resulted in a much higher number of uncompleted questionnaires.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it was judged that the validity of the responses provided could be ensured best when the DIT was administered to those participants who were judged sufficiently able and motivated to respond appropriately.

Giving the ongoing gender issues discussed in the Literature Review, it is important to establish first whether the data generated in this study shows a difference between male and female participants. The data of the questionnaires was analysed using the software package SPSS 11 for Windows.

#### 4.1.1. Gender issues

Results relating to the DAMRT and Parental Authority Questionnaire are listed in Table 13.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worthwhile noting that this situation did not occur with the other tests, the main feedback being that the participants found it easier to relate to the case studies and parental styles.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Moral Responsibility	Female	191	53.09	7.04	.51
	Male	214	50.84	7.71	.53
Permissive	Female	186	27.65	5.04	.37
	Male	214	27.57	4.94	.34
Authoritarian	Female	186	28.29	6.79	.50
	Male	214	29.85	6.13	.42
Authoritative	Female	186	36.56	5.58	.41
	Male	214	36.34	5.35	.37

Table 13: Group statistics gender differences

The results show that across the Year Groups girls have a higher moral responsibility score and that boys judge their parents to be more authoritarian. A 'Levene's Test for Equality of Variances' scored significance levels of .15 (moral responsibility), .82 (permissive), .06 (authoritarian), and .80 (authoritative). These figures conclude that the distribution is not sufficiently significant. Therefore, the research questions will not be examined separately for male and female but rather analysed and reported as one group.

#### 4.1.2. Research question one

*Do parental style, family structure, and cultural background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?*

##### 4.1.2.1 Defining Issues Test

The researcher decided to give a sample of the participants the DIT to measure their moral reasoning levels. The actual contribution of this data to the overall research project is the fact that it helps to establish how these levels compare with other samples examining the issue of moral responsibility using different instruments. In other words, given the fact that the DAMRT was not used in any other research project it was understood to be important to ask the question whether the present sample could be considered average in their ability to think through moral issues. The value of using the DIT is

mainly related to the large base of studies it can draw from. Due to time restrictions the DIT was given to 168 participants, which is 42% of the total sample. In line with Rest's guidelines for an internal check on participant reliability, 20 responses (Year 9 = 8, Year 10 = 7, and Year 11 = 5) were not included in the scoring calculations. The reason for this is that the participants' answers did not represent any stage of thinking but rather a tendency to endorse statements for their pompous wording rather than their meaning.<sup>2</sup> With regard to gender differences, no significant results were found. This was an expected outcome given the results of other studies using the DIT.<sup>3</sup>

Table 14 lists the average scores for each Year Group. From these figures one can conclude that the distribution of moral levels can be considered average for the target group with most of the responses in stages 3 and 4.<sup>4</sup>

Levels	2	3	4	5a	5b	6	A <sup>5</sup>	M <sup>6</sup>	P <sup>7</sup>
Year 9 N = 35	6.2	30.8	30.2	12.9	4.0	4.5	2.9	8.4	20.8
Year 10 N = 53	7.6	29.2	37.1	12.5	2.7	6.1	2.8	6.0	21.5
Year 11 N = 60	6.9	28.5	33.9	13.7	3.2	5.7	2.9	5.5	23.0

*Table 14: Scores Defining Issues Test*

<sup>2</sup> J. Rest, 1986. DIT Manual for the Defining Issues Test, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Rest, et.al., (1986, 1999) concludes that gender differences account for about 1.5% of the variances in the DIT scores, whereas education account for about 250 times more variance.

<sup>4</sup> For a general discussion see DIT Manual section 4.3. For a more specific examination one could refer to Kohlberg's findings with regard to age and stage development (1984). He found that the dominant stage for thirteen-year-olds was stage 3 (approximately 30%) with about equal numbers responding at stages 2 and 4 (approximately 20% each). Kohlberg found about a fourth of his sixteen-year-olds responses were at stage 5.

<sup>5</sup> 'A score' represents considerations that reflect an anti-establishment attitude. No specific research questions are related this score. The reason it is left in the table is that all scores (except the P score) together score 100%.

<sup>6</sup> The 'M score' refers to participants selecting answers that were meaningless within the context of the test.

<sup>7</sup> The P score is the general index of moral judgement development (Guide for DIT; Rest, 1993). The P score is a sum of scores from stages 5A, 5B, and 6, converted to a percent. Rest argues that one can combine these scores because 'usually they behave very similarly empirically, and theoretically they are all versions of Principled moral thinking' (p. 13. Rest, 1993).

#### 4.1.2.2. DAMRT

This section seeks to understand whether there are any significant relationships between the three variables (parenting styles, family structure, and cultural background) and the outcome found in the DAMRT. In order to be allocated to one of the parental styles the participant's combined score had to be above the mean for that type of parenting style and at least half a standard deviation above the remaining two scores.<sup>8</sup>

To start with the research explored the relationship between parental styles and moral responsibility scores. The higher the authoritative scores were the higher the moral responsibility scores are likely to be ( $r = .346$ ,  $n = 399$ ,  $\text{sig.} = .0005$ ). A similar but weaker relationship was found between authoritarian scores and moral responsibility scores ( $r = .175$ ,  $n = 399$ ,  $\text{sig.} = .0005$ ). The opposite effect was found with permissiveness ( $r = -.159$ ,  $n = 399$ ,  $\text{sig.} = .001$ ). The full sample is used for these calculations.

The researcher then looked at the differences between those predominately adopting one of the three styles. The sample is now divided into four groups; predominantly authoritative, authoritarian or permissive and those who showed no strong preference. Starting with the potential significance of parental styles an ANOVA comparing the overall level of moral responsibility for each parenting style was plotted.

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error
Authoritative	63	56.46	6.20	.78
Authoritarian	72	52.38	6.84	.81
Permissive	94	48.32	7.59	.78
Total	229	51.84	7.72	.51

*Table 15: Moral responsibility scores in relation to parental styles*

These results show that whereas permissive parenting is the least likely to encourage the development of moral responsibility, authoritative parenting provides the most beneficial climate for the adolescents' growth in moral

<sup>8</sup> The researcher follows here Buri's (1991) guidelines.

responsibility. Table 16 shows that belonging to a parenting style group makes a significant difference ( $F = 25.87$ ) to the moral responsibility score.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2531.83	2	1265.92	25.87	.000
Within groups	11057.19	226	48.93		
Total	13589.02	228			

Table 16: Significance level moral responsibility and parental style

Post hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustments show that there is a significant difference between the moral responsibility scores and all parenting styles.

Dependent variable: Moral Responsibility

Bonferroni

(I) Preferred parenting style	(J) Preferred parenting style	Mean difference (I – J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Authoritative	Authoritarian	4.07	1.21	.003
	Permissive	8.14	1.14	.000
Authoritarian	Authoritative	-4.07	1.21	.003
	Permissive	4.07	1.09	.001
Permissive	Authoritative	-8.14	1.13	.000
	Authoritarian	-4.07	1.09	.001

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 17: Comparisons between different parental styles

Differences in parenting style were still significantly related to differences in moral responsibility after gender and age differences were taken into account ( $F = 17.120$ ,  $df = 2,396$ ,  $sig. = .0005$ ). This means that the result is not due to age and gender but that the parent style is a powerful factor in this sample.

The next question to ask is how parenting styles are distributed in relation to the family structure. Calculation of this relationship did not generate any significant statistical results ( $\chi^2 = 8.746$ ,  $df = 10$ , sig. .556) and therefore no firm conclusions can be reached in this regard. However, this extra information about parenting styles is considered useful as a basis to probe more intelligently during the interviews, which helps create a context for research questions in phase two and three. While there are no significant differences overall, Table 18 indicates that the most permissive family structure is when the dad is the sole caregiver (60%). It must be noted, however, that this should only be seen as an indicator since the sample is particularly small ( $N = 3$ ). With regard to comparison of single parents and intact families it is interesting to observe that on the basis of this sample the highest score of authoritative parenting is found with adolescents who live with their mother only (30%). The intact families (26%) closely follow this. Finally, in this sample the participants rated their parents to be permissive (44%) more than any other parenting style.

Parenting Style	Family Structure					
	In-tact	Mum only	Dad only	Mum & step dad	Dad & step mum	Other
Authoritative	37 (26%)	11 (30%)	1 (20%)	12 (33%)	1 (17%)	1 (50%)
Authoritarian	42 (30%)	10 (26%)	1 (20%)	16 (43%)	3 (50%)	1 (50%)
Permissive	63 (44%)	17 (44%)	3 (60%)	9 (24%)	2 (33%)	0 (00%)
N (total 230)	142	38	5	37	6	2

*Table 18: Relationship between parental style and family structure*

The researcher was unlikely to find a significant result as there were so many cells, nine of which had less than five cases per cell. Because of this those families that were not intact were collapsed into one value. The analysis was run again. However, the results were still not significant ( $\chi^2 = 1.55$ ,  $df = 2$ , sig. .459).

	Intact	Non-intact
Authoritative	37 (26%)	25 (29%)
Authoritarian	42 (30%)	30 (35%)
Permissive	63 (44%)	31 (36%)
Total	142	86

Table 19: Relationship between parental style and intact and non-intact families

Using each individual's scores on authoritativeness, authoritarianism and permissiveness meant the total of 393 participants could be entered to examine the relationship between these dimensions, moral responsibility, and ethnicity. Permissiveness, authoritarianism and authoritativeness were entered as linear variables. These were used in preference to the overall parenting style as it allowed for more of the variance in the data to be used. It must be noted that this method of computation meant that the scores on these three scales were not statistically dependent upon each other. Family structure was entered as two dummy variables (FAMIT was coded 1 = intact family, 0 = other, FAMSF was coded 1 = broken family, 0 = other). Ethnicity was also a dummy variable called 'white' and 'Asian'. The following two tables are relevant.

ANOVA (b)					
	Sums of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4070.52	6	678.50	14.48	.00 (a)
Residual	18095.62	386	46.89		
Total	22166.14	392			

a = Predictors: (constant), Ethnicity, Permissive, Authoritative, step family, authoritarian, intact family. (significant to the .001 level.

b = Dependent variable: Moral responsibility

Table 20: Moral responsibility compared with predictors



Coefficients (a)					
	Unstandardised	Coefficients	Standardised		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	35.09	3.63		9.67	.00
Intact fam.	-1.17	.94	-.08	-1.24	.21
Step fam.	.05	1.17	.00	.04	.97
Permissive	-.19	.07	-.12	-2.61	.00
Authoritarian	.11	.06	.10	1.93	.05
Authoritative	.45	.07	.32	6.87	.00
Ethnicity	2.60	.83	.15	3.10	.00

a = Dependent variable: Moral Responsibility.

Table 21: Coefficients moral responsibility with predictors

From the above information we can conclude that the only meaningful predictors are authoritativeness, ethnicity (i.e. indicating that Asians scored higher on moral responsibility than whites) and permissiveness (negatively predictive). However, family structure does not render a significant result and could therefore not be seen as a reliable predictor for growth of moral responsibility as measured by the instruments in this research. This latter finding, in combination with the significant results for parental styles and ethnicity, supports the hypothesis which stated that out of the two variables family structure and parental style, the latter is the best indicator for moral responsibility levels.

#### 4.1.3. Research question two

The second research question states; 'Within the context of moral responsibility of adolescents, how do parents with different parenting styles, family structure and cultural background communicate and formulate parental responsibility during a moral conflict situation at home?' Following this, it was hypothesised that white participants who perceive their parents to be authoritative show higher levels of moral responsibility than those with

authoritarian or permissive parents. Table 22 shows that 171 participants could be classified within the three sub-scales of parental style.

	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Authoritative	44	55.50	6.08
Authoritarian	47	51.70	6.08
Permissive	80	48.05	6.90

*Table 22: Parental styles among whites only*

These results show that those adolescent participants of white origin with perceived authoritative parents score higher than authoritarian and permissive parents. Out of the three measured parental styles permissive parents scored the lowest mean in moral responsibility. An ANOVA one-way analysis of variance was used to establish the significance to the .01 level. This resulted in a significant result of  $F_{(2,396)} = 19.18$ . This hypothesis is therefore supported and the results are in line with findings in other studies carried out in America.

It was also hypothesised that a significantly higher proportion of Asian participants will judge their parents to be authoritarian rather than permissive or authoritative. To test this, two analyses were conducted. To start with the relationship between parenting style and ethnicity was established (see Table 23) and secondly Chi-Square test was used to examine the statistical significance of these results.

Parenting Style	White English	Asian English
Authoritative	44 (26%)	19 (33%)
Authoritarian	48 (28%)	25 (43%)
Permissive	80 (46%) <sup>9</sup>	14 (24%)
Total (N= 230)	172	58

*Table 23: Relationship between parenting style and ethnicity*

<sup>9</sup> It is noted that there is a high proportion of permissive parents in the white English sample. It is judged that this is not related to the nature of the instrument but rather indicative of the area in which the school is situated. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see section 5.2.2.1.

These results show that Asian participants do perceive their parents to be more authoritarian than authoritative or permissive. The latter is the least common parenting style amongst Asians in this sample. The Chi-Square tests showed that the differences between white and Asian participants is statistically significant (Chi Square = 9.30 df = 2 Sig. = .010). It can therefore be concluded that this hypothesis is correct for this sample.

In relation to the DAMRT it was hypothesised that Asian participants who judge their parents to be authoritarian will record similar moral responsibility scores to the participants with white authoritative parents. To examine whether this hypothesis is true of the present sample a two way ANOVA was used to compare the variables of Asian authoritarian and white authoritative participants with their scores in the moral responsibility questionnaire (see Table 24).

Ethnicity	Authoritative / Authoritarian	Mean	Std. Dev	N
White	Authoritative	55.50	6.08	44
	Authoritarian	51.70	6.08	47
Asian	Authoritative	58.68	6.06	19
	Authoritarian	53.68	8.06	25
Total		54.29	6.84	135

*Table 24: Asian authoritarian and white authoritative participants contrasted with moral responsibility scores*

From the above table it can be concluded that ethnicity does have an impact on moral responsibility. Asian participants of both authoritative and authoritarian parents score higher than their white counterparts. It must also be noted that the research hypothesis that white participants with perceived authoritative parents score similar levels of moral responsibility as Asian participants with perceived authoritarian parents is supported.

It was also hypothesised that those with permissive parents would show a broader range in moral responsibility levels than those governed by other parental styles. And within that group there will be a still broader range in broken families than intact families. In order to examine this hypothesis the scores of parenting styles need to be compared with the results of the

DAMRT (see Table 25). After this the significance of these outcomes is tested.

Parenting Style	N	Mean DAMRT	Std. Deviation
Authoritative	63	56.46	6.20
Authoritarian	72	52.39	6.84
Permissive	94	48.32	7.59
Total	299	51.84	7.72

*Table 25: Relationship between parenting styles and level of moral responsibility*

Although it is evident that participants of perceived permissive parents show a broader range in the scores of the moral responsibility, it cannot be concluded to be a significant statistical result (Levene's test of homogeneity of variance = .648<sub>(df 2,396)</sub> Sig.524). The second part of the hypothesis examines the range moral responsibility scores among permissive parents of intact and broken families (see Table 26).

Type family	N	Mean DAMRT	Std. Deviation
Intact	63	48.16	8.04
Broken	31	48.65	6.67

*Table 26: Permissive parenting style in broken and intact families related to level of moral responsibility*

These results are also not statistical significant (Levene's Test for Equality of Variance Sig. 438). In fact, the tendency was the opposite of what was stated in the hypothesis. Participants from perceived permissive broken families show a lesser range in their moral responsibility scores than those from permissive intact families. However, it must be noted that there is a substantial sample difference between these groups which might have influenced the overall outcome.

#### 4.1.4. Structure for next phase of the research

Data generated by this quantitative part of the research was designed to help the researcher identify specific participants for the interviews. To select the participants for the various interviews it is essential that the researcher takes into account all variables (parental style, family structure and ethnicity) in relation to the scores in the DAMRT. In order to access this information easily, all the variables were coded (see Table 27).

Parental Style	Ethnicity	Family Structure
1= Authoritative	1= White English	1= Mum & dad
2= Authoritarian	2= English Asians	2= Mum only
3= Permissive		3= Dad only
		4= Mum & step dad
		5= Dad & step dad
		6= Other

Table 27: Codes of variables

For example, an authoritarian Asian father only, would have a code of 223. Now that the students are identified in these various groups the research questions in phase 2 and 3 can be examined.

## 4.2. Results of phase two

*In this section the results of the structured interview (N= 101) are examined. As a starting point for this interview, the participants' individual answers of the DAMRT' were used. The interviewees were asked to explain their understanding of moral fairness in relationship to their perceived moral responsibility.*

The reader is reminded that the results of Phase One showed no significant statistical outcome between the three possible principles identified by Warton and Goodnow.<sup>10</sup> This is disappointing in the sense that further statistical analysis looking at these categories would render unreliable information given the lack of support of the previous analysis. The researcher

<sup>10</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991.

will discuss possible reasons for the lack of statistical significance in the next chapter. Also, gender and family structure have not been shown to be statistically significant variables in Phase One. Consequently, further tests with the data from Phase Two will not include these variables. Given the absence of statistical significance in Phase One it is not anticipated that many significant results will be recorded with this data. Nevertheless, the data of the interview is considered helpful and therefore included. The main reason for this is that an analysis of the information is conceived to help establish whether one could observe ethnic differences regarding reasoning about fairness and moral responsibility. Furthermore, this information will provide data that will enable the researcher to probe in more detail during the focus interview in Phase Three. It is anticipated that particular ethnic patterns or questions raised can be taken note of and, as such can be explored in more depth during this stage of the research project. For clarity's sake the data will be summarised by looking at key areas. Rather than examining each question individually the findings are reported in four sections. These are:

- Overall observations
- Family responsibility
- Sense of authority
- The role of a financial incentive

#### 4.2.1. Overall observations

For each question in the questionnaire, a crosstab and Pearson Chi-Square Test was plotted. Of the twenty-two separate tests (one for each question and four sub-questions<sup>11</sup>) only four analyses were statistically significant. The interviewer selected the option labelled 'misunderstood the question' when it became clear that the participant answered the question during the interview completely differently from the initial test situation. These answers were not analysed as new answers but only recorded as misunderstood question. Although this option was not selected often, it is interesting to note that the Asian population selected this option more regularly than the White population in the sample. If the answer provided by

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, question one. The main question focuses on the actual case study in the test and the sub-questions take this case study a little further and ask the participant if their answer would stand if a brother or sister was involved rather than a friend or fellow student.

the interviewee did not match any of the options on the interview sheet it was recorded as 'other'. Given the infrequent usage of this option these responses were not analysed separately. Overall, white participants had lower moral responsibility levels than Asian participants did. Having said that, it is interesting to note the questions where this was not the case. For example, question one refers to an exam situation. The participant is asked if cheating is wrong. White participants score 60% on the answer 'It is always wrong to cheat'. While only about half of their Asian colleagues (37%) chose this answer. In contrast the latter selected the answer which said that it 'was worth taking the risk of not getting caught' twice as often than the white participants. It will be interesting to explore in the focus interview if this is related to a heightened pressure in Asian families to do well at school or whether there is another cultural reason for this marked difference between the two groups.

#### 4.2.2. Family responsibility

Although it must be underlined that there is no overall consistent statistically significant result, it is evident from the gathered data that Asian participants do view moral responsibility for brothers and sisters differently from their White counterparts. The interview used four questions to look at this issue by comparing the same situation with two different sets of significant others. First, the case study focused on the relationship between participant and friend or fellow student and the latter was substituted with a family member such as a brother or sister. In each of these situations the Asian population reported a higher level of responsibility and greater sense of fairness seeking to protect and / or feel responsible for the action of the family member. For example, question two examined the issue of faking notes to miss a Physical Education lesson without a valid reason. Nearly half of both populations concluded that this is unacceptable. However, when asked if they would do it for a sibling, Asians (33%) proved to be much more ready to do this than white (7%) participants. Another example is question seven where the case study compares a friend and a sister stealing clothes from a shop. The same pattern of increased responsibility is observed when a sister is

caught stealing. Asian participants select more often the option that they 'definitely have the responsibility to talk to her' than an individual of the white population (29% verses 13%). These figures suggest that this level of heightened responsibility for a sibling is culturally influenced and should get more attention during the focus interview.

#### 4.2.3. Sense of authority

How do the two ethnic groups compare in their perceived authority in relation to their sense of moral responsibility? In the interview one can identify several types of authority. Two are of particular interest to this question, namely, the authority of society (what does the law say?) and the authority of a parent figure. Although both groups are in agreement when it comes to shoplifting (question two<sup>12</sup>) they differ substantially when a situation seems to be 'accidental'. Question eight examines this issue when a shop assistant gives too much change to the individual. The participant is asked whether they as the customer should go back into the shop or take the extra money. The majority of white participants (55%) conclude that this is the fault of the shopkeeper and therefore they will keep the money or just count themselves lucky that day. Only 20% say they would go back into the shop and report the mistake compared with nearly half (47%) of the Asian participants who claim they would return the money.

The authority of a parent figure is examined in two different ways in the responsibility test. Besides the parents of the participant there is also reference to the parents of a friend. Starting with the latter, Asian interviewees are more ready to go to a friend's parent to report that their child is stealing than white participants (27% verses 15%). Also, if an adult is mistreating a friend, Asian participants are much more likely to ask for advice from an adult (32% verses 18%). In relation to their own parents, the Asian population contributes more authority to their father and mother. For example, when the question is asked whether a son should explain how he uses his pocket money (question 12a), 22% of the Asian participants

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<sup>12</sup> 97% of the White participants say it is 'always wrong to steal' compared with 98% of the Asian participants.



conclude he should, compared with only 5% of the white participants. This is even more accentuated in the questions about responsibility for a younger sibling (question 14)<sup>13</sup>. Given the fact that he failed to follow parental instructions, 67% of the Asian interviewees feel they should bear the full responsibility in comparison with 23% of their White counterparts. The latter is much more likely to conclude that their friend is responsible since she should have known that such a video was wrong to show to a young child (25% versus 3%). On the basis of this information the research is likely to find a clearer sense of parental authority linked to moral responsibility among Asian participants in Phase Three.

#### 4.2.4. The role of a financial incentive

In a few case studies money was offered to help an individual behave better or provide the participant with an incentive to help him to keep a particular promise. It is interesting to note how the two ethnic groups view such ways of 'helping' individuals with a financial incentive. The large majority of white participants labelled this as bribing or said that money should not be given for something that the individual in question has to do anyway because this is expected of them in the first place<sup>14</sup>. However, the Asian participants looked upon this kind of support much more favourably. For example, a quarter of those interviewed suggest that the counsellor is wise in offering money to the bully if he stops bullying. Furthermore, they consider it as helpful for the child to get extra money if they promise not to consume alcoholic drinks during a party where the parents are not present to keep an eye on them (22% Asian versus 7% White).<sup>15</sup> The same pattern is observed when parents think about helping their son to stop betting by doubling his pocket money (15% versus 2%).<sup>16</sup> In conclusion Asian participants see the

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<sup>13</sup> The participant was asked to look after a younger brother. Due to a private and extended phone call the participant leaves the brother with a friend who watches an inappropriate video with him and at the time the mother returns home.

<sup>14</sup> For example the counsellor should not offer money to an individual to help him stop misbehaving.

<sup>15</sup> See question 11b.

<sup>16</sup> See question 12b.

financial incentive as a significantly more effective tool for discipline than the white participants in this sample.

### **4.3. Results in Phase Three**

*The results in this section are based on the data gathered during the focus interview (N = 35). This part of the research seeks to explore in much more detail the way in which participants experience the moral discussion and conflict situation at home. This section is organised in five main sections, namely; Introductory comments related to moral issues at home, Parental styles compared, Analyses of the perceived moral discussion / conflict, Silent moral argument, and finally Religious knowledge compared with moral knowledge.*

#### **4.3.1. Introductory comments related to moral issues at home**

Under this heading three questions are reported on. First, the question focuses on the perceived importance of the family in relation to the individual's personal moral development. Second, it examines how many times the participants classified an issue as moral. Finally, the question is asked how the participants saw their future family in relation to their present family environment. None of these questions is directly related to a specific hypothesis but do provide the researcher with useful information, which is helpful with regard to creating a clearer overview of the broader picture as to how moral responsibility is perceived to develop within the context of a family.

The tables in this section are used for descriptive purposes. Inferential statistics were not used because of the small sample size and large number of cells needed. This meant that there would be too few cases per cell for a meaningful analysis.<sup>17</sup> Questions must therefore be asked as to how meaningful the figures in the tables of the following tables might be. It would be naïve to suggest that one could come to firm conclusions on the basis of

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<sup>17</sup> Hays, 1994.

the often small differences that are reported in this part of the study. But the reader is reminded that this final part of the research is qualitative in nature with a relatively small sample. Limitations are therefore clear and to some extent comparison difficult because each situation communicates such a unique situation. However, such an approach to the present topic has its value since it examines the individual 'stories' of each participant in depth.

#### 4.3.1.1. The importance of the family

Despite the potential sensitivity of the information discussed in this interview, participants were very willing to participate in this part of the research. All participants accepted that the researcher preferred to record the interview on tape even though a couple took a little while to feel comfortable with it. Since an important focus of the interview was the role of the family, and the parents in particular, in relation to the development of moral responsibility, it was paramount to establish how the participants perceived the level of importance of the family in this respect. Using a 'pyramid model'<sup>18</sup> participants were questioned about who taught them right from wrong. Of the eighteen Asian participants, sixteen said their immediate family influenced them more than any other source. Four placed their family in the second level of importance after 'religious commitment'. However, the seventeen white participants in the population considered their family less important. Seven placed immediate family on level one, four participants considered themselves the most important influence, three observed school to be more significant than anything else and one participant said his grand dad had the most important influence on him when it came to learning about right and wrong. However, nearly all of them placed their family on the second level. In relation to significant others outside the immediate family unit, all of the white participants were also more likely to score friends to be more significant than the Asian participants who considered their extended family to play a very important role in guiding them to be morally correct. In summary, it can be concluded that all participants understood their family to fulfil an important role

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<sup>18</sup> This sorts the level of priority by putting in the top box the most important influence. Next level has two boxes that are equally important and so on. For this research four levels were used.

in relation to their personal moral development. However, of the two populations, the Asian participants attributed a more influential role to their parents than the white participants did.

#### 4.3.1.2. Moral issue frequency

At the start of the interview, participants were given a pack of prompt cards with different issues.<sup>19</sup> They were asked to order their responses to each card into one of three categories. The options were 'definitely a moral issue', 'somewhat a moral issue' and 'not really a moral issue'. If the participant felt they did not want to talk about an issue they put the prompt card on the pile 'no comment'.<sup>20</sup> Examination of this data provides us with some interesting and significant findings comparing the two ethnic groups (Chi-squared= 18.824, df= 2, sig.= .000). As can be seen from the table below, Asians saw many more issues as 'definitely a moral issue'.

Ethnicity	Definitely moral	Somewhat moral	Not moral	Total
Asian	54%	27%	19%	100%
White	41%	40%	19%	100%

*Table 28: Percentage of moral issues in relation to ethnicity*

In contrast the white population identified more issues as 'somewhat a moral issue'. Both sub-groups identified a similar number of situations they concluded were 'not really a moral issue'. A closer look at the individual prompt cards shows that there are certain moral issues that were particularly important for the Asian population. For example, issues such as 'under age sex', 'racism', 'respect for authority', and illegal substances, were considered

<sup>19</sup> A list of these prompt cards is recorded in the interview guide. See Appendix F, page two entitled 'Introduction, Defining the term Morality'.

<sup>20</sup> This option was used with all the participants less than five times throughout the entire interview procedure. Given this small number no mention of these cards is made in the overview tables in this section. The main reason participants selected this option was embarrassment or discomfort to talk about the specific issue. For example, a couple of times 'under age sex' was placed into this category. This was particularly the case when the participant was a female with an Asian background.

definitely wrong. In comparison, the white population perceived these issues in a more varied way.

When the scores related to the parental styles the following percentages are found.

Parental style	Definitely moral	Somewhat moral	Not moral	Total
Authoritarian	47%	35%	18%	100%
Authoritative	52%	26%	22%	100%
Permissive	44%	38%	18%	100%

*Table 29: Percentage of moral issues in relation to parental style*

Although it is concluded that participants of perceived authoritative parents display a greater range between the various categories, the difference in percentages is not as big as with the comparison between ethnicity and frequency of moral importance (Chi-squared = 9.149, df= 4, sig.= .057).

#### 4.3.1.3. Future families

Participants were asked to reflect on what kind of family they envisaged they would have twenty years later. Particular attention during the discussion was given to the kind of things they would seek to change in relation to moral development from the family they grew up in.

Parental style	Asian			White			Total
	Same	Similar	Different	Same	Similar	Different	
Authoritarian	2	2	2	0	2	4	12
Authoritative	1	2	3	5	0	0	11
Permissive	2	2	2	4	1	1	12
Total	5	6	7	9	3	5	35

*Table 30: Future perspective*

These figures show that white participants with authoritarian parents display the highest levels of dissatisfaction. It also indicates that white participants of permissive and authoritative parents are more content with their families in the sense that they anticipate their future families to be the same as the one they grew up in. Difference is small, but there are some interesting comments made by Asian participants which mark thoughts about possible future change in their families. Such change is characterised by several perceived alterations. Most Asian participants observed that they wanted a more open relationship with their own children and discuss moral matters in a way that communicates such openness. As one Year 10 boy explained: 'I want to be a dad who is more approachable. At home I can't talk about all the things I want. I've got to wait until he starts talking about it' (P310.21MA). A Year 9 girl said, 'I wouldn't be as strict as my parents and allow my children to find their own way more' (P39.8FA). It is also interesting to note the link between religion and expectations of a future family. A devout Muslim boy reflected on this and said, 'My future family would look very similar to the one I have grown up in. I would also teach them the same things as I have been taught. We are good Muslims you know...' (P311.35MA). The results above also show that Asian participants are more likely to see their future families as 'similar'. This suggests that they like to change some aspects of their family life but are eager to hold on to others. A closer examination of the observations of those participants shows that they want to hold on to their cultural traditions but believe that it is possible to do so by embracing more Western values. They also said repeatedly that more transparent discussions were essential. Topics such as drugs, alcohol, and sex were mentioned several times within this context. As a Year 9 girl said: 'I would give my children more time to say what they want to say. I would want to listen to them and see if we can find some sort of compromise. I would certainly be more open about issues such as drugs' (P39.12FA).

Compared with the Asian population the white participants showed a broader range with regard to their ideas about their future families. It is notable that all the participants with authoritative parents see their future families following the way they were taught by their own parents. As a Year

10 boy observed, 'we are very close in our family. My father is very good and always helps me and never hits me. He is the kind of dad I want to be later' (P310. 14MW). Four of the six participants with perceived authoritarian parents reported that their future families would look very different. A Year 9 boy said, 'my family would be very different. I would make sure that I listen to my children first and I would be a lot more open...' (P39. 4MW). Someone else observed, 'I would be very different from my dad. I would be much less strict and discuss more with my children.... I would also let my wife have a say...' (P310.25MW).

#### 4.3.2. Parental style compared

This section examines the data of the focus interview in relation to the perceived parenting styles. Particular attention is given to the question as to how these scores relate to the results of the 'Parental Authority Questionnaire'(PAQ).

In response to the hypotheses regarding the instruments measuring parental style, this section will compare scores of the 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' in Phase 1 with the outcome of the interview conducted during Phase 3. Bringing these scores together is obviously an important part of establishing the reliability of the method of gathering the data about perceived parental styles. At the outset of this section it must be noted that examining the same issue using two fundamentally different research methods is likely to generate somewhat different 'pictures'. The key question is therefore whether the data collected actually contradict each other or whether it in fact provides the researcher with a richer and fuller understanding of the parental styles at the participants' homes. To illustrate this the following two points are worth making. First, there is the issue of comparison. The PAQ asked the participants to reflect on the parental style of both parents as a unit, rather than each of them individually. In contrast, the interview was structured to explore similarities and differences between the parents (including biological parents who are no longer living at home). This extra dimension in the interview is expected to generate more complex data with perhaps subtle or significant differences between parents. Second, the issue of broader context

information must be mentioned. Given the qualitative nature of the interview, the coding of the participants' responses involves looking at specific as well as broader context information provided during the interview. As will be explained below, the participants were to make a simple statement about their parents' parenting style. This, however, in some cases contradicted the overall information given about moral discussion and conflict situations at home. Therefore this section aims to weigh up the information of the total interview and compare it with the PAQ.

#### 4.3.2.1. Results of the interview compared with the PAQ

A table listing the scores of the PAQ and the interview is given below. The parental styles in the first column stand for the identified parental styles on the basis of the scores in the PAQ. The columns with figures from 100 to 0 are the coding of the interview data. It must be pointed out that this is not part of the test scoring as such. Rather the researcher uses these numbers to categorise the various responses given by the participants. For example, when a participant's comments were in complete agreement with his PAQ scores, it was coded 100. However, if the statements communicated the complete opposite of the PAQ score, it was coded 0. It must be stressed that the codes are not percentages because the instrument cannot measure with such precision. Nevertheless, the codes do indicate identifiable levels and communicate in summary the 'story' of the individual.

Parental style	100	50	25-50	<25	0	Possible total
Permissive	2	4	2	4	0	12
Authoritative	7	3	1	0	0	11
Authoritarian	1	6	3	0	2	12
Total	10	13	6	4	2	35

*Table 31: PAQ scores compared with interview scores*



The rest of this section will look at the data extracted from the focus interviews<sup>21</sup> and argue that participants who were coded 100 – 50 are in line with their PAQ scores. Consequently their information can be used comparing parental style scores with other variables such as ethnicity and moral responsibility scores.

#### 4.3.2.2. Participants coded 50

As already pointed out, the PAQ scored the parents as a unity. This is particularly relevant in relation to the thirteen participants who scored one of their parents in line with the PAQ. Of this group, nine participants scored their father the same in the interview and PAQ. During the interview it was quite apparent that when serious decisions were about to be made, the father played a significant role and took the main authority. Although not exclusively, this was particularly pronounced when a participant came from an Asian family. As one girl said: "Mum and dad talk a lot together ... but my dad is the dominant one" (P311.33FA). So it is likely that the participant has filled in the PAQ with the parent they consider having the final authority at home. This argument is strengthened by a closer look at the remaining scores in this section. In these cases there is clear evidence that the father fulfils a more or less absent role when it comes to moral discussions. In two cases the mother is a single parent. One year 10 girl said: "Sometimes I have to talk to him, but I don't like it. ... He doesn't live with us" (P310.17FW). In two Asian families of this sub-group the father clearly doesn't have a major influence on his adolescent child. In one case this is through illness and in the other through work and personality. The son of the latter commented: "Dad is abroad a lot, our characters are also quite different. I am more like my mother and find it easier to discuss things with her" (P311.32MA). Placing these figures within the context of each individual home background it is acceptable to suggest that these four participants scored the PAQ with the most influential parent in

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<sup>21</sup> One section of the focus interview (see Appendix F, no.6) asked the participants to comment on parental styles at home. The participants were shown a general overview with the three parental styles as a starting point for this section of the interview. They were also asked to comment on in what way they felt their parents different in their styles and give examples to support their observation.

mind. It can be said that the interview has enriched the researcher's understanding of parental styles at home. Moreover, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the extra collected data contradict the PAQ scores.

#### 4.3.2.3. Participants coded 50 – 0

Next we need to turn our attention to the participants who perceived their parents' authority unlike their scores in the PAQ. Before examining possible reasons for this, it is interesting to note eight out of a total of twelve are Asian students. Consequently, one could question whether there is an ethnicity-related issue at play. Also, it is notable that the most common parental style selected is authoritative (16 x authoritative in relation to 2 x authoritarian and 4 x permissive). Finally, it is interesting to observe that there is only one Year 11 participant.

There is one participant who perceived her parents' authority exactly the opposite from the PAQ and interview. For the sake of clarity, it is best to say a few words about this interview to start with, since its data is uniquely different from the rest. Without going into too much personal detail, it was clear to the interviewer this participant was going through a very significant phase in her life. This girl was interviewed just two days after a major upset between her mother and stepfather. In fact, her mother had left with her younger sister and the girl was staying with a friend. Understandably a large part of the interview was 'coloured' by the present home situation. It was clear that communication was poor and tension high. She said at one point: "...problems are so big at home, I don't want to talk to my parents about it" (P310.23FA). Whereas a year ago she perceived her parents to be permissive, now they were understood to relate to her in an authoritarian way. It seems likely that the current climate in the family had a major effect on how she perceived her parents at this particular moment in time. Openness and acceptance had given way to secrets, anger and a generally demanding atmosphere. Given the recent stressful situation such a change is understandable, and certainly not surprising, which arguably made comparison with previous data rather unreliable.

When we examine the rest of this group (N=11, see table below) the interviewer observed that quite a few participants focused too much on the listening skills of their parents and therefore did not give enough thought to the relevant aspects of other parenting styles. For example, since the option 'authoritative parent' clearly states 'listening' and "discussing", many readily identified with this and selected the parents to be authoritative, hence a possible reason for the high coding of authoritative parenting. Given the prior information about the PAQ scores it would have been easy to somewhat influence the participant through a guiding question. It could, perhaps, have even been pointed out that they had left out some aspects of the other parental style. However, it was felt that this would not enhance the quest to understand the participant's story and rather aim to fit PAQ test results with a preferred outcome (a poor interview technique!). It is also important to underline that this one particular question on parenting style is within the context of discussions taking place at home. One can therefore compare parental style language and concepts with this statement about parental style. This would help to assess whether some participants have chosen the authoritative style option without having reflected on the other parental styles. To get a better understanding of the total picture the following table is presented. The participants in this section are listed with their scores.<sup>22</sup> Added to this are representative quotes which tell us more about adolescent / parent interaction. These are drawn from the section about moral discussion and conflict in the interview.

---

<sup>22</sup> FA1 and FA2 stand respectively for the mother's and father's parenting style.  
1= permissive, 2= authoritative and 3= authoritarian

Code	no	Gn	Eth.	Par.	FA	FA	Representative Quote	
				Style	1	2		
P39.4MW	1	M	W	A-tarian	2	1	"...we have very open discussions at home"	-
P39.3MA	2	M	A	A-tarian	2	2	"Don't find it easy to talk to my dad... I can't challenge him."	+
P39.9FW	3	F	W	A-tarian	2	2	"I feel my mum understands me"	-
P39.11MA	4	M	A	A-tative	1	1	"My brother talks to us... he has the responsibility at home"	+
P39.12FA	5	F	A	Perm	2	2	"My parents always talk to us together."	-
P310.13MA	6	M	A	Perm	2	3	"I feel my parents understand me" (incoherent interview!)	-/+
P310.16MA	7	M	A	Perm	2	2	"I talk a lot with my dad, he understands me."	-/+
P310.19MW	8	M	W	Perm	3	2	"...my dad is not very strict."	+
P310.20MA	9	M	A	A-tarian	2	2	"Dad is very strict... mum you just have to listen to."	+
P310.27FA	10	F	A	A-tarian	2	1	"When I disagree with my parents I won't tell them because I get problems"	+
P311.31FA	11	F	A	Perm	2	2	"My mum allows my brother to do anything"	+

Table 32: Overview of representative comments

This table shows that six of the eleven participants gave information in other parts of the interview, which is in line with their earlier PAQ scores. In two cases (participant 6 and 7) the interview generated no relevant information to decide the reliability of the PAQ scores. Particularly participant P310.13MA provided the interviewer with several answers, which together formed an incoherent overall picture. The extra information of three participants (no 1, 3, and 5) clearly confirmed the perception of parental style in the interview and therefore did not match with the score in the PAQ.

Given the wider context of the interview it is reasonable to conclude that the six participants who scored 25-50 are closer to the PAQ score than their observation of the one question on parental style. A possible reason might be that they focused too much on listening skills. Perhaps this has an ethnicity influence as well since all them are Asian. For example, some of them might have wanted to play down how strict their parents are most of the time. In one case it was clear that the participant had passive parents but an authoritative brother who fulfilled a parental role within the family (P39.11MA). The researcher has therefore accepted the data rendered by these participants as suitable for comparison with other variables in the study. The data of the remaining six participants are only moderately useful for further analysis. This means that the individual stories as such are of value for discussion. However, to use this data for the direct comparison between parental style and another variable (i.e. score in DAMRT) would be misleading since there is not enough evidence to establish the adolescent's perception of his parent's authority. To ensure clarity during this chapter on this issue the researcher has added a \* to the data bank next to the parental style indicator (for example 'Perm \* or A-tarian\*). By doing so, the reader is at all times reminded of the lack of evidence in regard to parental style.

#### 4.3.3. The moral discussion and moral conflict argument

This section reports on the interview results of both the moral discussion as well as the moral conflict situation at home. The reason these two are examined alongside each other is to ensure that patterns and parallels are presented most clearly since several areas obviously overlap significantly. Having said this, where there is judged to be a marked difference between moral discussion and conflict situation this will be reported on separately. The data is reported on under the following headings:

- Participants
- Start and location
- Frequency
- Emotional value
- Outcome

- Speech categories
- Fathers

The section 'Speech patterns' examines the manner in which the moral discussions and conflicts were communicated. Powers' DECS codes were used for this analysis which is rather detailed. Therefore, this section is further divided into four subheadings. These are, 'Speech Categories that were not assessed', 'Challenging Speech', 'Sharing Speech Patterns' and 'Support Speech Patterns'.

#### 4.3.3.1. Participants

Considering the potential and possible outcome of any discussion or conflict situation it is important to establish first the type of participants and their role. On the basis of the data provided from the interviews the following table sets the context for a closer examination of individual participants. Given the fact that two types of communication situations (discussion and conflict) are looked at here, it must be noted that participants were able to talk about more than one individual who took part in the moral discussion or conflict at family home (total N discussion = 31; Asian =15, White = 16, total N conflict = 20; Asian = 6, White = 14).

Type	Asian Mother	Asian Father	Asian Other	White mother	White father	White other
Discussion	12 (75%)	6 (75%)	6 (86%)	14 (54%)	7 (61%)	4 (67%)
Conflict	4 (25%)	2 (25%)	1 (14%)	12 (46%)	5 (39%)	2 (33%)
Total	16	8	7	26	13	6

*Table 33: Moral discussion and conflict frequency*

On the basis of the data generated by these interviews, mothers are understood to be the main discussion / conflict partners. Fathers' participation is about half that of the mother. Whereas white participants provided comparable levels for both discussion and conflict situations, Asians score much lower on the conflict situation. This is a significant and interesting

result. Three Asians and one white participant said they hardly discussed moral matters with their parents, whereas twelve Asians and three white participants said that this was only the case in moral conflict situations. The category 'other' covers participants such as brothers, sisters and extended family. It is noticeable that the influence of such individuals nearly halves when there is a conflict situation. However, such a marked difference is expected since conflicts of this nature more often than not exclude individuals with lesser authority.

It is also interesting to examine this data in relation to perceived parental styles. The following table lists the outcome of this comparison.

Type	Asian Mother	Asian Father	Asian Other	White Mother	White Father	White other	Total
Permissive Discussion	2+2*	1+1*	2	4+1*	2+1*	1	12+5*
Authoritative Discussion	3	1	3	5	1	1	14
Authoritarian Discussion	5	3	2	2+2*	2+1*	2+1*	16+4*
Permissive Conflict	1+1*	0	1	3	2	1	8+1*
Authoritative Conflict	0	1	0	4	2	0	7
Authoritarian Conflict	2+1*	2	0	3+1*	2	1	10+2*

*Table 34: Moral discussion and conflict in relation to parental style*

This overview shows a general picture of less conflict than discussion. This is particularly the case for the perceived authoritative and authoritarian parental styles. However, it must be noted that this result is mainly influenced by the ethnicity variable. The Asian participants score much higher on discussion than conflict situations. For the white population of the sample

discussion levels and conflict levels are very similar. Furthermore, it is also interesting to observe that comparing discussion and conflict situations only slightly affects the role of the mother in two of the three styles.

Comparing the data with the moral responsibility score variable, highlights a mixed picture. If the scores are ordered in roughly three groups (i.e. <50, 50-60, and >60), no significant patterns are observed in the first two groups. However, the latter shows predominant influence of the mother during moral discussions (total N = 11; mother 8 and father 2). Also, in this subgroup are eight of the eleven participants commented that they do not have moral conflict situations at home.

#### 4.3.3.2. Frequency

What kind of information did the interview produce in relation to the frequency of moral discussions and conflict situations? The two types of communication are compared with each other. The following table provides an overview.

Type <sup>23</sup>	Discussion	Discussion	Total	Conflict	Conflict	Total
	Asian	White		Asian	White	
Regularly	8 (53%)	7 (47%)	15	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2
Sometimes	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	14	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	7
Not often	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10
Not at all	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	3	13 (81%)	3 (19%)	16

*Table 35: Moral discussion and conflict in relation to ethnicity*

As can be seen above, moral discussions were reported to take place frequently. In fact, Asian and white participants present a very similar level of frequency. This changes dramatically when we look at moral conflicts. Whereas white participants have a periodic conflict, Asian participants concluded this not to happen or it to be very unusual. When this is compared

<sup>23</sup> 'Regularly' = several times a month, 'Sometimes' = couple of times a month, and 'Not very often' = less than once a month.



with the perceived parental style it can be concluded that the frequency of moral conflicts is largest in participants with authoritarian parents. As can be seen in the scatterplot below, participants with higher DAMRT scores are less likely to have regular moral conflicts with their parents.

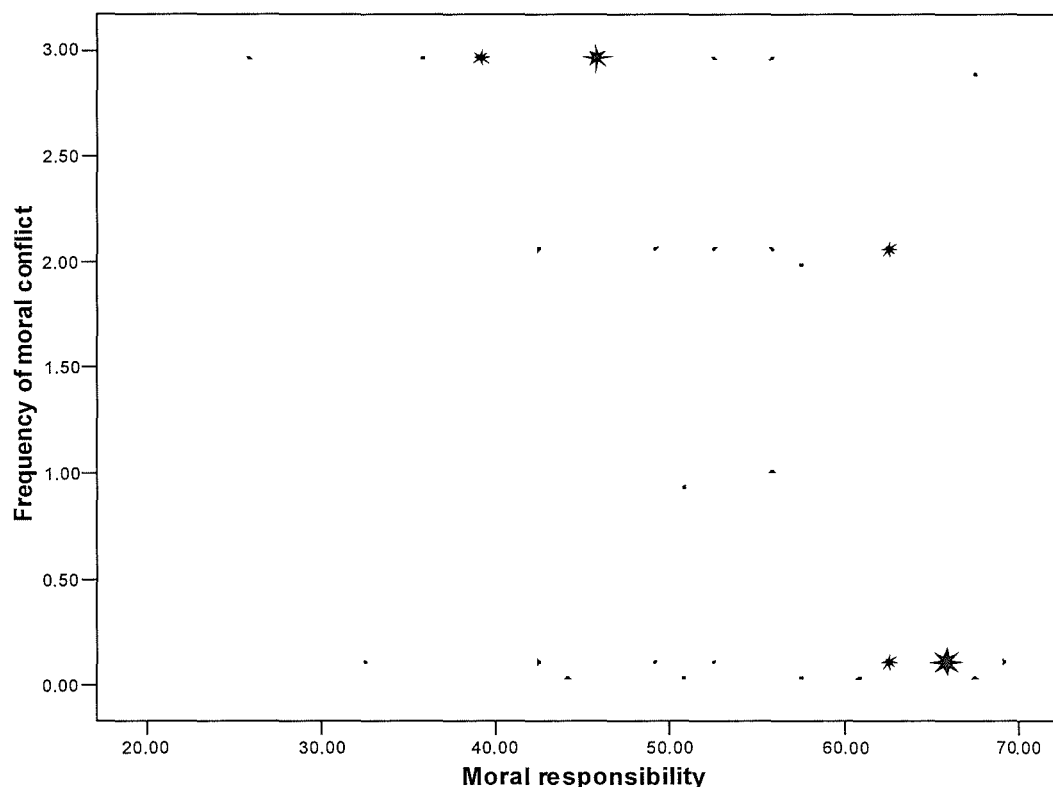


Table 36: Scatterplot comparison moral score with moral conflict frequency

#### 4.3.3.3. Emotional value

The emotions as described by the participants in relation to moral discussion and conflict were coded using the following set of codes:

- |            |              |            |
|------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. Anger   | 4. Enjoyment | 7. Disgust |
| 2. Sadness | 5. Love      | 8. Shame   |
| 3. Fear    | 6. Surprise  |            |

It is important to remind the reader that these codes were used for the specific examples the participants described to the interviewer. In other words, the question was not about emotions experienced during a general moral discussion but examining a specifically described moral situation and what

was felt during that particular time. Since the description of these emotions is unique to each participant's story, it is easy to misinterpret them and hence there is danger of drawing conclusions. However, a very broad overview highlights a pattern that is worth mentioning in the context of parental style. When numbers 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 are used they are judged to be broadly speaking negative, while the remainder are positive. The question asked is what would one observe if these two groups were compared with the three parental styles? The table outlines this general picture. It must be noted that participants could have expressed more than one emotion for describing the same situation.

Type	Permissive	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Total
Positive discussion	9 (29%)	14 (45%)	8 (26%)	31
Negative discussion	14 (46%)	5 (17%)	11 (37%)	30
Positive conflict	3 (25%)	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	12
Negative conflict	12 (57%)	4 (19%)	5 (24%)	21
	38 (40%)	28 (30%)	28 (30%)	94

*Table 37: Emotional value*

This table shows that as a general observation authoritative families score higher on positive feedback and lower on negative feedback during moral discussion and conflict situations. One of the main reasons the positive conflict figure is relatively low is due to the fact that so many participants in that category say they do not have moral conflict situations at home (6 out 11).

#### 4.3.3.4. Outcome

Examining the way the moral discussion or conflict finished provides us with some useful findings. The points that are interesting for the overall discussion will be outlined below. It must be underlined again that these results are very general statements within the context of specific stories told by the participants. More statistical analysis in order to come with clearer

measurable outcomes was considered. However, the researcher did not have enough cases per cell to carry out chi-square tests of association.<sup>24</sup> Therefore this does not allow the researcher to come to firm conclusions. Despite lack of a high level confidence the researcher sees this data as relevant, since one can take note of general patterns where they are evident. It is therefore accepted that in order to establish the significance of these outcomes a future study to examine these issues with a larger sample is needed.

To start with, participants recorded seventeen times that the moral discussion came to a perceived positive end, four times the discussion went on over a period of time (specific example quoted by a participant was 'referred to another discussion'), and four times the issue was not solved. Six times a participant reluctantly accepted a standpoint of the other participant during the discussion. The picture changes considerably when we consider the data on moral arguments. Part of the reason is, of course, that a substantial group (N =15) said that moral arguments did not take place at home. Of the remaining participants, nine judged the outcome of the argument to be positive, whereas three concluded the problem was not solved at all. Finally, seven participants reluctantly accepted parental reasoning and one participant said the issue was talked about more in another discussion.

Of particular interest is the relationship between parental style and rate of solved issues during a moral argument. The following table shows that parents with a perceived authoritarian style have adolescents with higher unsolved issues and more reluctant agreements (Total N = 35, 0 = no moral argument, 1 = 'issue solved', 2 = 'referred to another discussion', 3 = 'reluctantly accepted', and 4 = 'issue is not solved').

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<sup>24</sup> Hays (1994), comments that for tables with more than a single degree of freedom, a minimum expected frequency of 5 can be regarded as adequate for carrying out the Pearson chi-square test of association.

Parenting style	Code	Authoritarian *	4	Permissive	0
				Permissive	0
Authoritarian	0	Authoritative	0	Permissive	0
Authoritarian	0	Authoritative	0	Permissive	0
Authoritarian	0	Authoritative	0	Permissive	1
Authoritarian	1	Authoritative	0	Permissive	1
Authoritarian	1	Authoritative	0	Permissive	1
Authoritarian	4	Authoritative	0	Permissive	3
Authoritarian	4	Authoritative	1	Permissive	3
Authoritarian	3	Authoritative	1	Permissive *	0
Authoritarian	3	Authoritative	3	Permissive *	0
Authoritarian	3	Authoritative	2	Permissive *	1
Authoritarian *	1	Authoritative	3		

Table 38: Outcome moral conflict

These figures also show that moral conflict situations are less prevalent and more often solved when the parents are perceived as permissive. Comparing the scores with the ethnicity variable, Asian participants reported less conflict situations (N =12), one unsolved, two solved, and three situations they reluctantly agreed. White participants reported three times that they did not have conflict situations at home. Seven participants said the issue was solved at the end of the argument, whereas four reluctantly agreed and three found no solution.

Compared with the DAMRT scores, there is a general pattern which shows that the participants with the lowest and the highest scores have lower levels of conflict discussions, and if they take place, are more likely to be solved with a positive outcome. See table below (Total N = 35, 0 = no moral argument, 1 = 'issue solved', 2 = 'referred to another discussion', 3 = 'reluctantly accepted', and 4 = 'issue is not solved').

Moral sc.	Code	45	3	53	0	63	0
25	1	45	3	55	4	63	3
33	0	46	1	55	3	65	0
35	1	49	0	56	1	66	0
39	1	49	4	57	0	66	0
39	1	51	0	57	1	66	0
42	0	51	4	60	0	68	0
42	3	52	2	62	0	68	1
44	3	52	3	62	1	70	0

Table 39: Outcome compared with moral responsibility score

#### 4.3.3.5. Speech categories

On the basis of Power's work the data gathered was coded on speech categories. This falls into four subsections namely, challenging, sharing perspective, avoidance and support. But before the outcome of this data is reported it must be noted that several of the DECS codes were not assessed to the same level of detail.

##### 4.3.3.5.1. Speech categories used for this research

The DECS is a very detailed instrument and originally developed for the analysis of an actual moral discussion between parent and child. Due to a different approach within this research context four of the speech categories were not coded in the interview. These are, focusing, rejecting, distortion, and affective conflict speech categories. The reason for this is that these codes rely significantly on the presence of the researcher at the actual discussion between adolescent and parent. For example, the code of focusing relies on the ability of either participant to paraphrase or check for comprehension of a given argument. Addressing the issue through the eyes of the adolescent, it proved too difficult to actually understand whether this happened on a regular basis. This leads to the second reason of reliability. Several of the categories listed in this section were noted during the interviews, but given the nature of

the interview and the level of the adolescent's own involvement it was concluded that the data was stretching its reliability and 'concluding' patterns were difficult to retest. For example, several Asian participants explained that they would refrain from conversation or look away as particular topics were discussed. They explained that the main reason for this was related to respect for their parents. It must be noted, however, that these participants felt it was very important to follow such cultural rules and expectations. This is accepted by many of the Asian population as the starting point for moral reasoning, as is clearly expressed by a participant who reflected, '...what they (parents) say is right, don't argue about it... what they say is wise' (P310.16MA). It is evident that perceived lack of respect for the family is often interpreted as a sense of disgrace for the whole family. As a Year 11 participant expressed in relation to this, 'I can't disagree with my parents about these moral issues because I would disgrace the family' (P311.32MA). An Asian girl commented on this issue by saying, 'I have to be good, you see, I am the oldest daughter and I have to be an example for the rest of the family' (P311.33FA). Consequently, the parents' opinion is seen to be an important guide as to what is right and wrong. The above girl continued by saying that something was wrong when 'it hurts my parents...' (P311.33FA).

Other participants related that they encountered threatening behaviour from one of their parents or stepparents. This was always described as a potential threat rather than actual physical harm. For example, an Asian girl said during her interview, 'dad threatens us but never gets round to it' (P311.34FA). At the time of the interview a white participant was about to leave the home of her step-dad together with her sister and mother. She explained that her step-dad repeatedly threatened her. From a different angle, another form of threatening behaviour was noted in avoidance. An Asian girl in year 9 reported how her dad and her older sister had major problems about the lifestyle of the sister. Despite many forms of discipline the sister did not change and 'continued to disgrace the family'. The participant then commented, 'dad just ignores her completely and hasn't said anything to her for a long time' (P39.7FA).

All the above examples can be coded as avoidance, rejecting or affective conflict. However, it is judged that the coding as set out by Powers lacks precision and clarity, and thus in all likelihood creates a picture that is not in line with what the instrument had set out to measure. Yet it can be concluded that the above mentioned speech patterns were more common in Asian families than in the white families of this sample. Having said this, it must be noted that most Asian interviewees actually seldom spoke about these encounters in a negative way. It seemed they were expecting such type of communication to take place and believed that it was acceptable and often quite understandable. They were eager to make this point and often communicated within the context of a structure of care and support. As one girl said, 'I want to listen to my parents, do well and be successful' (P39.7FA). For others the type of behaviour described above was not challenged because acceptance of the situation was part of their religion, '...in my religion I need to respect my parents and do what they say' (P310.26FA).

In conclusion the interview data does identify the presence of speech patterns such as rejecting, distortion and affective conflict. However, the interview has not been able to examine them in the detail described in Powers' handbook for the DECS. Therefore, although it is concluded such patterns are present they are not analysed in relation to parental style or moral responsibility scores.

#### *4.3.3.5.2. Challenging*

During the interview the participant was asked to explain how he was challenged on his ideas on moral issues. Of particular interest was the manner in which he perceived he had to hold his own ground in relation to other arguments presented and his ability to evaluate and appreciate other viewpoints. The same question was raised in relation to the parents. The following table will provide an overview.

Type	Permissive	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Total
Competitive clarification	4	3	3+1*	10+1*
Critique	4+3*	4	7+1*	15+4*
Competitive request	2+2*	2	3+1*	7+3*
Counter restriction	4+2*	2	5	11+2*
Competitive opinion statement	5	5	3	13
Simple disagreement	3+3*	3	7+1*	13+4*
Total	22+10*	19	28+4*	69+14*

*Table 40: Challenging speech patterns compared with parental style*

This information shows that conflict situations in perceived authoritative families have least challenging speech, closely followed by permissive families. Authoritarian families score the highest in most types of speech, as well as overall. A closer examination of the figures shows that participants with authoritarian parents score the highest levels of criticism and simple disagreement. The participants with perceived authoritative parents display the lowest level of counter restriction and simple disagreement. It is interesting to note that the participants with permissive parents score nearly the same level of critique as those of authoritarian parents. All participants record similar levels of competitive requests.

Comparing this data between the different ethnic groups renders the following information.



Type	Asian	White	Total
Competitive clarification	4 (11%)	8 (17%)	12 (14%)
Critique	10 (27%)	10 (21%)	20 (24%)
Competitive request	5 (13.5%)	5 (10%)	10 (12%)
Counter restriction	5 (13.5%)	8 (17%)	13 (15%)
Competitive opinion statement	5 (13.5%)	8 (17%)	13 (15%)
Simple disagreement	8 (21%)	9 (18%)	17 (20%)
Total	37	48	85

*Table 41: Challenging speech patterns compared with ethnic background*

This table shows that challenging speech is reported more or less similarly in white and Asian families ( $\chi^2 = 1.376$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $sig. = .927$ ). However, the nature of the responses given shows that the term challenging speech was not understood in the same way by both groups. This probably relates to the cultural or religious expectation where certain challenging statements are considered disrespectful. As an Asian girl said, '... you know talking back to your mum is not a good thing at all... the conversations we have often last for a very long time... 75% of that time I just listen and say yes' (P311.34FA). In contrast many participants of white families displayed a much higher degree of openness and familiarity with one or both of their parents. Characteristically this type of relationship is shown by a comment of a Year 10 boy who said, '...you know, my parents want me to learn for myself... they discuss lots of things with me and ask me to explain what I think' (P310.14MW). There was a clear sense that such discussions were not only accepted but that it was also very much valued by both parties involved. The emphasis on the individual's thinking was encouraged and judged to be essential for the person's growth into adulthood. Some of the white participants accepted that at times they were less than tactful during such discussions but the general consensus according to them was that their parents saw this as an inevitable part of growing up. Consequently, a 'sorry'

was often considered enough of an apology. It is also noted that the counter consideration and opinion statement is more guarded with the Asian population. It was observed during the interview that the white participants were often more willing to stand up for what they thought themselves. The Asian participants clearly did not have the same level of freedom to discuss issues with their parents as a unit. It must be noted, however, that in relation to this it would be incorrect to suggest that Asian participants therefore accepted all instructions and had not formulated their own thoughts. It was clear from the data collected that many Asians might not discuss all with their parents but would discuss most of their thoughts with brothers, sisters or extended family. In relation to a list of the prompt cards a participant reported, 'I don't discuss these things with my parents, only with my sister and brother' (P310.26FA).

#### 4.3.3.5.3. *Sharing speech patterns*

The two tables below give an overview of the sharing patterns identified in the data gathered during the focus interview.

Type	Permissive	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Total
Opinion statement	7+2*	5	8+2*	20+4*
Clarification	3	9	2+2*	14+2*
Request	5+2*	3	3	11+2*
Simple agreement	0	2	1	3
Total	15+4*	19	14+4*	48+8*

*Table 42: Sharing speech patterns compared with parental styles*

Type	Asian	White	Total
Opinion statement	13 (48%)	11 (40%)	24 (44%)
Clarification	8 (30%)	8 (30%)	16 (30%)
Request	4 (15%)	7 (26%)	11 (20%)
Simple agreement	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	3 (6%)
Total	27	27	54

*Table 43: Sharing speech patterns compared with ethnic background*

It is noticeable that there is no overall difference between the two ethnic groups. The information in relation to the parental styles shows that the participants with perceived authoritative parents score highest in regard to clarification speech patterns. It must be noted that the DECS handbook recognises two types of clarification.<sup>25</sup> Although it is understood that one can distinguish these two types while observing an actual discussion, the present research method made it more difficult to come to firm conclusions on either style, and therefore clarification is coded in this context as one category. It is noteworthy that opinion statements are highest with perceived authoritarian and permissive parents. However, it is important to mention that the direction of these opinions was not the same. For example, the interview showed that most of the coded opinion statements with the participants of authoritarian parents came from the parents themselves. The participants explained that their parents readily shared their ideas while, for instance, the family was watching a TV programme together. Most of the time the participants commented that they were used to this and as such accepted this form of communication by their parents. This speech pattern was therefore not perceived as a specific pressure. There was no need to agree, even though several expressed that they did not take all the information seriously either. On the other hand, the participants with permissive parents often reported that they felt at ease to voice their opinions during a conflict situation. Often they were even encouraged to say why they felt they did or said a particular thing.

<sup>25</sup> This first is 'explain and justify' and the second 'integration'.

#### 4.3.3.5.4. Support

Examining the opinion statements of the parents the table below shows that support is judged highest in families with perceived authoritative parents. They reported a higher frequency of encouragement and listening responses by their parents. The least support is received in authoritarian families. The participants of an authoritative family show more listening responses than any other family. The non-competitive humour speech pattern is low for all parental styles.

Type	Permissive	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Total
Encouragement	6+1*	9	5+1*	20+2*
Non-competitive humour	1	1	0	2
Listening responses	6+2*	9	4+2*	19+4*
Total	13+3*	19	9+3*	31+6*

*Table 44: Parental support compared with parental style*

When the two ethnic groups are compared, two patterns emerge as important. Whereas the reported encouragement levels are the same (both  $N = 11$ ), there is a difference in listening response (Asian 9 and white 14). It is concluded that the white participants in this sample felt more listened to than the Asian participants. Moreover, it seems that the issue of respect, individual parents and extended family play an important role in relation to this finding. This is therefore more reported upon under subsequent headings.

#### 4.3.3.6. Moral conversation with fathers

How, if, or when do fathers talk to their adolescent children about moral responsibility? Several interesting patterns were observed after coding the interviews. To start with, only a few participants ( $N = 4$ ) felt they had a very open relationship with their father in relation to moral responsibility discussions. All four of them were boys, two white and two Asian. Each felt strengthened and encouraged by the quality of this relationship. They commented that they would often ask their father for advice or just find it

“interesting to talk to him... it helps me to understand what I think” (P310.21MA). A closer look at the actual descriptions of the moral discussions and conflict situations shows much more of the former and rather less of the latter, suggesting that issues are likely to be talked through before they reach conflict level. One participant said: “What they say is right... it is wise, you know what I mean” (P310.16MA). In fact, all four participants struggled to relate a recent moral conflict situation during the interview and came up with dated examples or issues started by siblings or friends but not directly related to their actions. None of these four participants perceived their parents to be authoritarian and one of them lived only with his father since his mother had died when he was younger (P310.21MA). It was interesting to note the comparison the three other boys made between mother and father. All of them communicated a deeper sense of support when they discussed things with their father; “He is calmer and more interested” (P310.18), “I speak with my dad because he understands me” (P310.16MA), and “my dad believes me” (P310.19MW). A closer look at possible reasons why the relationship was not considered as open with the fathers of the other participants produced some other notable insights.

Five categories of reasons for not talking to the father about more moral issues were identified as listed in the table below.

Reason	Total	Asian	White	Permissive	Authoritative	Authoritarian
Not very approachable	5	1	3	0	3	1 (+1*) <sup>26</sup>
Not the sort of person	5	2	2	3	1	1
Disrespectful	2	2	0	1*	1	0
Just don't talk about such things	3	1	2	1*	1	1
Too busy	3	1	2	0	1	1 (+1*)
Total N	18	7	9	3 + 2*	7	4 + 2*

Table 45: Reasons for lack of discussion

<sup>26</sup> \* PAQ Authoritarian scores were not confirmed during interview.

The participants who said that their father was 'not very approachable' spoke to him about moral issues did not communicate a sense of unease about talking about it during the interview. They explained that most of the time someone else, particularly the mother, was more approachable. In other words, if told or expected to discuss a moral issue with the father they would, but most of the time this was not the case. Note that three of these participants perceived their parents to be authoritative, linking this parental skill particularly to the mother. The participant from an authoritarian family said, "it depends on whether he (*father*) is alone" ((P311.29NM). He went on to explain that his father listens more to him when he is alone. When the father's wife (the boy's stepmother) joined "dad would always side with my stepmother" and talking to him became much harder. The same number of participants commented that their father was just not the sort of person to talk to. Often participants perceived this as a lack of understanding. "I am close to my mum, but dad (stepfather) is just not that kind of person. He doesn't understand" (P39.2FW). An Asian boy said: "My dad wouldn't really know how" (P311.30MA). In another interview the father was described as "good and caring" but "just doesn't know how to be close to his family" (P311.31FA). Consequently little moral discussion / conflicts took place between father and daughter. Only two participants pointed out that it was simply disrespectful to talk to their father about moral issues. Both of them were Asian and particularly the girl emphasised that she only spoke about moral issues with her older brother and sister. A moral conflict situation with either parent simply did not take place. She explained that if a situation came anywhere close to this she "stopped the conversation because it is disrespectful to talk to your parents like that" (P310.26FA). The three participants who said that they 'just don't talk about such things', all communicated a sense of distance in their relationship with their father. In one case this was an actual physical as well as emotional distance and she only saw her father during the holidays (P310.23FW). An Asian boy explained that although his parents were at home, his older brother and sister raised him more (P39.11MA). Moral responsibility was therefore defined by talking to them rather than to his parents. The final reason given for lack of father-child communication was

due to job commitment. "...Dad is always busy..." (P311.35MA) or "...my dad is away a lot, so I don't see him that much really..." (P39.9FW), typified the observations of these participants. It is notable that although the participants saw the absence of the father as a barrier for communication about moral issues, this barrier was not perceived to be insurmountable. For example, one boy explained: "... you know, when I need to talk about something serious, you know man to man stuff... I'll go with him to work on a Saturday... that's a good time to talk to him" (P310.14MW).

The final group to examine in this section is the participants who commented that their father only gets involved in moral discussions or conflict situations when 'it is serious.' This was the single biggest group (N13), consisting largely of Asian participants (Asian = 9 and White = 4). It is also interesting to note that five of the nine Asian participants come from perceived authoritarian families and only one from a permissive family. An opposite pattern was evident with the white participants (three from permissive families and one from an authoritarian family). This was also the only sub-group with a noticeable link between moral score and relationship with the father. The average moral responsibility score for the white adolescents is forty-four and that of the Asian participants sixty. The role of the father in the latter group was also more often one of unchallenged final power. Sometimes this relationship was interpreted as threatening and frightening. For example, "I don't really look at my dad" (P311. 33FA) or "... he is really angry with my sister and doesn't talk to her at all anymore" (P39.7FA). Other times the father has a more distant role in the family whereas the mother raises the children. Only when there is a matter of dispute or the severity of the issue warrants his involvement he is called upon. As an Asian girl observed "... mum will raise the issue and dad will agree... he makes the decision" (P39.12FA).

#### 4.3.4. Silent moral argument

It was hypothesised that 'silent moral arguments' take place in families of all parental styles but are most accentuated among participants with authoritarian parents. The results of the interview show that more than half of

the participants from time to time disagree with their parents about moral matters, but do not voice it. Some feel very strongly about their own point of view but nevertheless prefer to avoid talking about it if at all possible. The frequency of such silent arguments varies. Ten participants commented that this happens 'regularly', while such disagreements only occur 'sometimes' for another ten. Seven concluded only 'seldom' to keep a moral disagreement to themselves and eight said they would 'never' entertain such a silent argument. The researcher observed that a silent argument could have different levels of intensity as well as various meanings to each individual. To gain a better insight into the nature and reasons of these internal conflicts or lack thereof, this section will examine the interview data from different angles, connecting it with other key variables in the study. The aim is to understand patterns or concepts that might be of interest to the overall goals of the present research. To start with, the data will be examined in relation to the parental style and ethnicity. Comparing the frequency of silent moral arguments with the three parental styles generated the following results.

Style	/	1	2	3	4	Total
Frequency <sup>27</sup>						
Permissive		1+2* (30%)	3 (30%)	2 (33%)	3+1* (50%)	9+3
Authoritative		1 (10%)	5 (50%)	2 (33%)	3 (38%)	11
Authoritarian		6 (60%)	2 (20%)	2+1* (33%)	1* (12%)	10+2*
Total		10	10	7	8	35

*Table 46: Frequency compared with parental style*

The most significant outcome is found in the answers of the participants who perceived their parents to be authoritarian. Most of them admit to having a silent moral argument 'frequently', which is a confirmation of the hypothesis. Only one felt this 'never' happened. However, in the case of the latter participant, the PAQ scores might be unreliable. Nevertheless, there is a clear pattern of frequency that is endorsed when the authoritarian style is

<sup>27</sup> 1= 'frequently', 2= 'sometimes', 3= 'seldom' and 4= 'never'



compared with the other two parenting styles. It is interesting to find that five participants of authoritative parents 'sometimes' kept their moral disagreement to themselves. Perhaps this is somewhat higher than expected and the reason for it needs to be explored in more detail. Such analyses will follow below. On the other end of the scale, participants of authoritative and permissive parents more often concluded that they 'never' would keep their disagreement internalised.

Comparing the white and Asian participants the following results were observed.

Ethnicity / frequency <sup>28</sup>	1	2	3	4	Total
Asian	6 (60%)	5 (50%)	3 (43%)	4 (50%)	18
White	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	4 (57%)	4 (50%)	17
Total	10	10	7	8	35

Table 47: Frequency compared with ethnic background

Although one can see that Asian participants have a slightly higher level of silent moral arguments, this can in no way be judged as significant. In fact, the two populations rendered nearly identical scores, especially when taking into account that the Asian population is slightly larger. However, when the white participants with perceived authoritative parents are compared with Asian participants of authoritarian parents it is interesting to note that their levels of silent conflict are very similar. This does suggest that there is a different understanding of parental style. In other words, it seems that Asian participants of authoritarian parents perceive this style of authoritarian parenting very differently from their white friends with the same style of parenting at home. With this information as a useful starting point it is important to look more carefully at the reasons given for the silent moral arguments. By doing so one can establish more clearly whether the two population groups and the various parenting styles tell us different 'stories' which are significantly distinct from each other.

<sup>28</sup> 1= 'frequently', 2= 'sometimes', 3= 'seldom' and 4= 'never'

#### 4.3.4.1. Respect motive

Eight participants reasoned that it would be incorrect to voice moral disagreement because by doing so they disrespect their parents. All of them come from Asian families. One boy commented: "Islam teaches me to respect my parents... really they are open but there are certain things you just don't discuss with them" (P311.35MA). A Year nine girl talking about this issue observed: "This is definitely related to our culture. These things are very serious... I would get in trouble and my parents might think that I am doing wrong" (P39.12FA). From the interview data gathered, it is obvious that these respect boundaries are clearly drawn. Furthermore, upholding them is a matter of identity. As a boy said, referring to certain moral issue cards in the interview: "It is scary to talk about it... this is bad in Islam and bad for the name of the family."

Seeking to approach the issue of respect in relation to morality from a slightly different angle, the participants were also asked how their parents would react if they (the adolescent) did something morally wrong in a public place, for example a shop. Would they be told off there and then? When this question came up one white boy smiled and said: "My mum would probably shout at me so that I get embarrassed" (P39.10MW). A different parental approach but perhaps equally embarrassing was communicated by a white Year 10 participant who explained how he had started to get into minor theft just over a year ago. The shop did not catch him but when his mother found out about it she communicated in no uncertain terms why she was disappointed in his actions. Following this, "my mother made me go back to the shop... I felt so embarrassed" (P310.24MW). The shame was obviously very public! However, these two illustrations are not typical for the entire population interviewed. Most participants believed their parents would quietly speak to them and deal with the wrong in a private place like their home or in the car. The main reason given was to avoid 'embarrassment' and 'didn't want other people to know'. However, a closer examination showed that the Asians interpreted this level of embarrassment as shame for the family. For example participants said: "...we would stay quiet and not embarrass the family" (P31.27FA) or "... never do that, it makes our family look crazy"

(P39.3MA). White participants saw the sense of embarrassment and shame much more in relation to them or their mother as an individual. One girl said: "My mum would tell me off but not make a big scene" (P39.2FW), while another said "...my mother doesn't want others to think she is a bad parent" (P39.6FW).

Thus far the data examined respect for the parent as its focus. In other words, moral discussions are within the context of what the parent says is right or wrong. Families where discussions were judged much more adolescent centred, in the sense that their view points were respected and valued, were either permissive or authoritarian as well as predominantly white (eight white and one Asian). Unlike the group above, a silent moral argument occurred 'seldom' or 'never' and participants felt they could discuss anything with their parents. A white girl in Year 9 said: "Mum and dad listen to my point of view and want to know why I think it... they are happy to allow me to have my own ideas" (P39.1FW). A boy in Year 10 said: "I always talk with my parents about what I think is right or wrong ... my parents taught me to think for myself" (P310.24MW). These examples clearly illustrate that respect is much more defined in terms of equality. All members of the family are encouraged and, arguably, expected to reason their own contribution to the discussion. The data gathered does not suggest that this focus change of respect condones disrespectful behaviour but concludes that adolescents feel much more free to discuss any moral issue and reach different conclusions than those of their parents.

#### 4.3.4.2. Keep yourself to yourself

Another reason participants gave for their silent moral arguments is that keeping their thoughts to themselves was perceived to be beneficial. Within this group one can see two patterns developing. The first relates to avoiding miscommunication and the second is more concerned with avoiding arguing about the moral issue. Both will be looked at in turn.

One Year 11 participant said in his interview: "I have a wider understanding of these issues (*referring to the prompt cards on the table*) than my mother... if I try to talk with her about it the discussion will be different from

what I want it to be" (P311.32MA). With a big smile a Year 9 girl said: "My parents would probably explode if I talk about sex" (P39.12FA). Both of the above participants are Asian and their observations were representative for the five Asian participants in this group. They reflected on the influences that had shaped their moral thinking. Their world fell into two clearly defined realities. Issues not readily discussed at home but, for example, normal conversation material during their school lunch, are potentially the source of major misunderstanding. Classroom discussions about drugs illustrates this point. The level of openness during such discussions does not reflect the openness at home. Furthermore, the participants commented that an attempt to discuss it would make the parents come to invalid conclusions and generate an unfounded concern. So in a sense this silence is based on an acceptance that their parents simply will not understand their learning environment outside the home, as well as protecting their own thinking space by avoiding unnecessary labelling. Although authoritarian parents seemed to accentuate this process (1\*=permissive, 1= authoritative and 3=authoritarian) these interviews highlight that this whole issue was much more rooted in the cultural background of the participant than the parental style. The two white participants who observed that certain moral discussions would give their parents the wrong impression said this for very different reasons. They both were aware that their actual deeds did not match their parents expectations and they sought to avoid punishment or grief.

The second sub-group was less concerned about their image, but more so about the intensity of the disagreement with their parents (Total N 5: 1= Asian and 4 white). As one girl put it: "We have such different opinions. I try to stay off the subject to avoid an argument" (P310.23FW). Someone else observed: "...he (*dad*) feels so strongly about this that I will never convince him otherwise" (P310.25MW). The common pattern between these participants was that they had reached a point where every discussion about the moral topic would be painful, annoying or would "close a door" (P311.28MW) as one put it. Except for the Asian participants, the dilemmas were not so much rooted in specific cultural differences but rather in the development of a different value system.

#### 4.3.4.3. Topics of silent moral argument discussions

When the participants were asked what sort of moral issues they would not discuss with their parents several common patterns became apparent, which will be examined in this section. It must be noted that participants were given the option to name several moral issues in response to this question. A table is considered helpful to set the context.

Type	Perm A	Perm W	A-tative A	A-tative W	A-tarian A	A-tarian W	Asian	White	Total
Drugs	1*	1	3	2	1	1	4+1*	4	9
Sex	1+1*	1+1*	3	1	6	0	10+1*	3+1*	15
Drinking	1*	0	2	0	2	2	4+1*	2	7
Smoking	0	1*	0	0	2	0	2	1*	3
Other	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	3	5
Total	3+3*	3+2*	8	4	12	4	18+2*	12+2*	38

Table 48: Silent argument issues

This table does not list the participants who felt they could speak about any moral issue with their parents.<sup>29</sup> The first point that can be drawn from this overview is that white parenting styles have similar total scores for the various topics. Looking more closely at the individual stories there is a noticeable difference in reasoning about why such discussions do not take place. The participants of authoritative parents prefer not to talk about the issue because of a sense of embarrassment, whereas participants of authoritarian parents strongly disagree with the rules set. Asian participants progressively keep more silent moral arguments when their parents are perceived stricter. It is also interesting to see that out of the top three topics, sex is considered the most unlikely one to talk about. In line with the discussion above it must be remembered that this is clearly linked with the cultural expectations within which the participants have been raised. A Year 10 girl said: "You just don't talk about such things with your parents" (P310.27FA). Such topics may, however, be discussed with someone in the

extended family. Overall, Asians kept more silent moral arguments than white participants.

#### 4.3.5. Religious knowledge compared with moral knowledge

To structure the data gathered regarding the issue of the relationship between religious knowledge and moral knowledge, it will be reported on two levels. First, the direct evidence of links between religious knowledge and a sense of moral responsibility. Second, the indirect evidence one can gather through data from other sources within the interview and indeed other tests. For example, participants would start to talk about their religious understanding in relation to a discussion on right and wrong. Before exploring this further, a few general introductory figures are judged important in order to set the context for the direct and indirect information about this issue.

Of the thirty-five participants interviewed, twenty-four were categorised to have, to a higher or lower degree, a religious commitment, and eleven felt they were not religious in any way. The religious participants could be divided into three separate groups of faith orientation; eight Christians, eleven Muslims and five Hindus. Of the eight Christians four were in some doubt about whether they saw themselves as religious or not. Comments such as "...we are a bit religious" (P311.28MW) or "...we don't really discuss this very often at home" (P310.25MW) are characteristic for this subgroup. One of these participants made an interesting observation when asked about religious commitment. He said: "... religion does make a difference, so I accept religious ideas... but shape me? No I don't think that would be true... I went to church and they taught me why racism is wrong... but I think school taught me even more" (P311.29MW). Another Year 9 boy out of this group said: "I want to respect everyone and that will teach me what is right and wrong" (P39.4MW). All these four participants said that the Bible was never used as a guide during moral discussions or conflicts at home. On the basis of this brief overview it seems fairly reasonable that the participants in this group are more influenced by the Christian traditions of this country than by

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<sup>29</sup> Total N=12; 3 Asian and 7 white

the religion itself. There is no doubt that this might also be the case with some of the other participants and the traditional religion in their family. The difference is, however, that these participants doubted their religious convictions. So at the outset it is important to note that the rest of this section will not include the data gathered from these four participants. The label 'religious' is therefore only given to those who gave a clear and positive answer to the question whether they were religious or not.

A few general comments on the three religious groups are helpful in order to create a framework for the other results. Of the four Christians only two participants came from a family where both parents themselves were Christians. One participant's father was not a Christian, but her stepmother was. Finally, one boy's mother had passed away when he was young and his father was Sikh. The participant and his sister were converted in the last few years to Christianity. Although he loved talking about his faith during the interview it was clear that such discussions were not so easy at home and he felt he had to be sensitive because of his father's religious convictions. With eleven participants the Muslim group was the biggest subgroup in this interview. All participants in this group were of Asian origin. Also, all interviewed in this group were part of intact families where both parents followed the same faith. None of the girls interviewed wore a scarf. Without exception the Muslim participants were absolutely clear about their religious commitment. Finally, five participants followed the Hindu faith. Characteristic of this group is that the faith has many different gods and therefore participants talked about commitment to different deities. For four their faith played a significant role in their lives whereas one observed religion was "somewhat important" (P39.8FA). To close this section of general comments, it is important to point out that the large majority of this 'religious group' was Asian as the following table shows.

Type	Asian	White	Total
Christian	2 (11%)	2 (12%)	4
Muslim	11 (61%)	0	11
Hindu	5 (28%)	0	5
Not religious	0	15 (88%)	15
Total	18	17	35

*Table 49: Religious groups*

#### 4.3.5.1. Direct links between religious knowledge and moral responsibility

The term 'direct link' is used within this context to mean that the participant is actually commenting or observing that they see moral responsibility directly related to their understanding of faith. In other words, their cognitive structure of faith has helped them to integrate a greater sense of moral personality. These results are again reported according to the three religious groups.

Two of the four Christians said that they felt they were, as one puts it, 'watched by God' (P310.14MW). This was to them related to 'judgement day' (P310.13MA). Decisions were therefore made in the knowledge that their actions had an effect on their eternal future. They felt they were responsible to be good but could, as one put it, also ask for forgiveness. Within this context he said, "...you see, if you do something on purpose, that is different from making a mistake... if you make a mistake you can ask for forgiveness" (P310.14MW). Two said it was normal to bring up the Bible during moral discussions. The participant whose father was Sikh felt unable to talk to his father too much about his faith commitment but he did talk regularly to his sister and uncle about it. Only one of the participants went regularly to church to learn more about his faith.

The Muslim participants were most outspoken about their sense of moral responsibility in relation to their faith. To start with, eight of the eleven talked about the importance of the Qu'ran as a guide for their actions. As one of them puts it, "...the Qu'ran tells me how important issues are and what is



right and wrong..." (P310.20MA) or someone else, "...the proof is in the book...it tells you about bad deeds" (P311.30MA). The centrality of the teaching of the Qu'ran came across in many interviews as well. A girl said, "dad always talks about the holy book" (P30.12FA). A Year 11 boy commented, "...the Qu'ran has the final word" (P311.35MA). Most of the participants also read the Qu'ran on their own regularly. At a certain point in life, most of the female participants started to reach a certain age of maturity, the girls are expected to read the Qu'ran and pray by themselves at home while the boys go to the mosque. This was noticeable in the interviews with the boys who would, besides praying, also go to study classes. Some would go every day after school. The influence of the teaching about their faith has a very significant effect on their understanding of moral responsibility. One Year 11 boy puts it clearly by saying, "...we see all things in a religious way... this is what you believe and we use this as the knowledge base for what we do..." (P311.32MA). Another participant said within the context of talking about how he knows what is right and wrong: "...I know this by myself...because of the teaching at the mosque" (P39.11MA), or a girl commenting within the same context: "...I just don't do these things because of my faith" (P310.26FA). It is also interesting to see that participants consciously cultivate this teaching and seek to make it their own. One girl commented within the context of trying to do what is right: "... I am putting a lot of effort into it" (P311.34FA). Finally, the sense of moral responsibility is linked to their belief in afterlife. All students had a concept of being watched. This was not always understood to be an enjoyable experience as one participant observed: "I am a scared person, Allah is always watching" (P311.33FA). It was their responsibility to be good and do right in life. The afterlife existence was clearly related to this moral responsibility of doing right.

The Hindu participants made much less reference to religious discussions in relation to moral responsibility than the Muslims. Only two out of the five said their religion was a point of discussion. None of them mentioned that they read the Holy Scriptures regularly. There was more emphasis on, as they put it, 'tradition' and its importance. Within this context respect was considered important by all. The only Year 11 participant who

was also the most outspoken about her religion, shared how she would regularly pray for help and guidance. She explained how her family had “changed their god... he gives us more guidance... we have a better relationship with him... he is more like a friend” (P311.31FA). She commented that this sort of relationship helps her to make the right decisions in life. Notable is that none of the participants received teaching at the temple.

#### **4.4. Overview of hypotheses**

The reader is provided with a brief overview of the hypotheses stated in the Literature Review and list whether the data in this study has produced a positive result in the sense that the hypotheses are confirmed. This will also lead to the next chapter of this thesis where these results are discussed in relation to other relevant studies and potential future projects.

1. *On the basis of the scores gathered through an established moral reasoning questionnaire, the participants will show to be a comparative sample with average moral reasoning levels.*

*It was found that the results in this study are comparable with the DIT results published.*

2. *Out of the two variables family structure and parental style, the latter is the best indicator for moral responsibility levels.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a significant result.*

3. *Those with permissive parents will show a broader range in morality responsibility test than the other parenting styles. And within that group will be a still broader range in broken families than intact families.*

*In this study participants of broken families rendered no statistical results.*

4. *Authoritative parenting generates higher levels of moral responsibility than authoritarian and permissive parenting.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a statistically significant result.*

5. *White participants with perceived authoritative parents show higher levels of moral responsibility than those with authoritarian or permissive parents.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a statistically significant result.*

6. *Asian participants will score higher moral responsibility levels than white participants.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a statistically significant result.*

7. *Asian participants will judge their parents to be authoritarian rather than permissive or authoritative.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a statistically significant result.*

8. *Asian participants who judge their parents to be authoritarian will record similar scores in the responsibility test as white participants with authoritative parents.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a statistically significant result.*

9. *Using the DECS instrument as a framework for coding, interview responses provide speech patterns of constructive and destructive conflict.*

*Due to the different manner the speech patterns were assessed, the researcher concluded that for some speech categories this instrument is good. However, for others there are limitations.*

10. *Participants with perceived authoritative parents show higher levels of moral responsibility than those with authoritarian or permissive parents due to higher levels of constructive speech patterns.*

*The data generated by the focus Interview showed that in this research this is particularly supported when you compare the authoritative with the authoritarian parenting style.*

11. *Asian participants will record lower levels of moral conflict discussions.*

*The focus Interview recorded higher levels of conflict with white participants.*

12. *White participants of authoritarian parents express their disagreement with their parents significantly more than Asian adolescents of authoritarian parents.*

*The focus interview data showed that Asian participants interpret respect differently from the white peers.*

13. *A silent moral argument takes place in families of all parental styles but is most accentuated among participants with authoritarian parents.*

*The focus interview data showed that participants of authoritarian families display highest levels of silent moral arguments.*

14. *White participants of authoritarian parents and Asian participants of authoritative parents record similar levels of silent moral arguments.*

*In this study this hypothesis is supported by a statistically significant result.*

15. *Participants of 'broken' families record a broader range in levels of 'silent moral arguments' than adolescents from 'intact' families.*

*In this study this hypothesis was not further examined since the first hypotheses in relation to family structure did not render sufficient significant result.*

16. *Faith structure and emotional commitment to it, help the participant explain more clearly their reasons for their moral responsibility.*

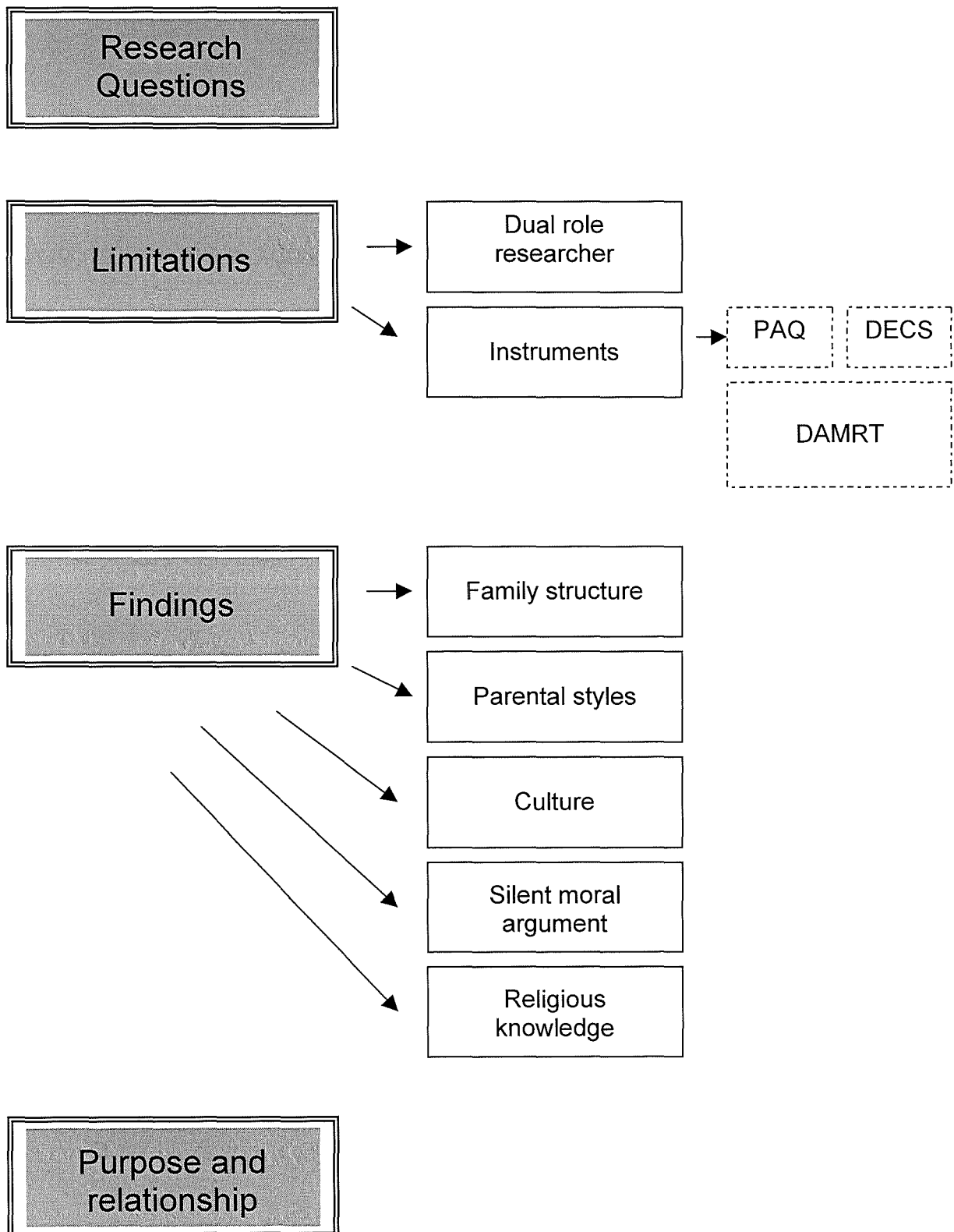
*This study found that Muslims are most clear about the role of their faith in relation to their faith.*

17. *Among all those who consider themselves committed to a faith, the religiously conservative participants provide the clearest examples of the link between religious knowledge and reasons to explain their moral responsibility.*

*This study found that this hypothesis is particularly supported among the Muslim population in the sample.*

# Discussion

## Schematic overview Discussion Chapter



## 5. Discussion

This study started out with the goal of gaining a better understanding of moral responsibility among adolescents. The specific focus was on moral discussion and conflict situations at home and how parental style, ethnicity and family structure influence this process. The four research questions guiding this research project were:

1. Do parental style, family structure, and cultural background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?
2. Within the context of the understanding of moral responsibility of adolescents, how do parents with different parenting styles, family structure and cultural background communicate and formulate parental responsibility during a moral conflict situation at home?
3. How often and to what extent do adolescents avoid discussing their opinion regarding moral responsibility with their parents when they disagree with them ('silent argument')? Has the parental style, family structure, or cultural background a measurable influence on the frequency and nature of 'silent' disagreements?
4. In what sense does an understanding framework enable an adolescent to increase his moral responsibility?

With these questions this research places itself within the wider quest of seeking to understand the impact of different types of life contexts on the moral responsibility of young people.<sup>1</sup> As discussed earlier, the present study is distinctive given its combination of variables, the usage of instruments and the comparison of moral responsibility between two ethnic groups within multicultural British society. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the

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<sup>1</sup> Walker, 1996.



relevance and significance of the research findings, as well as how these have contributed to our understanding of the development of moral growth among adolescents.

Whereas the above research questions highlight specific individual research areas, they are also interrelated and, therefore, are likely to overlap in the sense that several findings and their conclusions could be discussed under more than one of the research questions. To avoid repetition, the discussion of this chapter is organised into six sections. These are; limitations, family structure, parental style, ethnicity, the silent moral argument, and moral / religious knowledge. Within this context the researcher seeks to discuss the various research hypotheses outlined in the Literature Review.<sup>2</sup> This is done with three objectives in mind. First, it seeks to discuss the findings of the various questionnaires and interviews. Second, it aims to examine this data in relation to other findings examined in the Literature Review. Finally, this chapter explores various new concepts that are highlighted in this research project and could possibly be furthered by future studies in the field. The researcher aims to conclude this section with a schematic model that addresses key concepts in this study. The focus of this model is to highlight the influence on the understanding of moral responsibility by looking at the link between purposeful living and quality of significant relationships. The value of this link is not so much an answer to a single research question or hypothesis but rather an observation on the basis of all data gathered. In this sense it draws the findings generated in this project together and as such provides questions regarding the integration thereof, to be explored in future studies.

## **5.1.        *Limitations***

Before discussing the findings it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present research. This is paramount in order to place the

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<sup>2</sup> An overview of these hypotheses in relation to the research findings is listed in the final section (4.4.) of the Methods Chapter.

observations and conclusions within the larger context of other research findings as well as potential future studies. The present section falls into two parts. First, the researcher reviews the likely limitations related to the population in this study, followed by a discussion of the dual role of the researcher as interviewer and teacher at the school. Second, the perceived limiting factors of various instruments used in this research project will be examined. It must be noted that the discussion in this chapter is bringing together and evaluating points discussed more extensively in the methods chapter.

#### 5.1.1. Data gathered through the eyes of adolescents

Data gathering in this research is based on the observations, perceptions and conclusions of adolescents. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that this is but one point of view. This, of course, could be considered to be a limitation. However, as shown earlier this researcher has sought to minimise this limitation in various ways.<sup>3</sup>

In short, the researcher recognises and accepts that by placing a study within a certain context, limitations are inevitable. However, careful planning and an informed selection process have guided and structured this research in such a manner that this study is not hindered by its single focus on adolescent observations. Rather, the unique viewpoint of these young people and how they understand and formulate moral responsibility provides valuable insights for the bigger picture of moral development. Furthermore, this study communicates clearly the adolescent's perception of a moral discussion (or conflict). As such, it provides future studies with an alternative reference point which is significant in its own right.

#### 5.1.2. Sample limitations

It must be noted that the participants taking part in this research are based at a school in a particularly deprived area. For instance, the percentage of free school lunches is higher than the national average. Also,

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<sup>3</sup> See Method's chapter, section 3.2.

the reading age of a number of the participants was below the average of their age group. These factors are understood to be a possible limiting factor on the research results and therefore one needs to accept that some of the outcomes in this study cannot be generalised to a wider population. For example, it is possible that some of the questions in the questionnaires were challenging for some of the participants. One could therefore argue that some of the results found could be more representative of a younger age group or simply do not reflect reality since an incorrect answer was provided. Taking this potential limitation into account the researcher also wants to point out that not the whole sample could be considered weak and below national averages for their age. It is also important to underline that many of the able participants were especially eager to participate in the project and readily volunteered for phase two and three of the research.

### 5.1.3. The role of the researcher

Would you tell your teacher what you think is right or wrong and how your parents discuss moral issues with you at home? Given the obvious potential complications of the teacher's position of authority, it is important to examine this question, especially since it could pollute the entire process of data gathering. As argued, the eagerness, commitment and high level of openness of most participants during the interviews, provide strong support that the information obtained was genuine.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, with regard to the sensitivity of the topic, it is judged to have helped the study in that the researcher had a greater understanding of each individual participant. What is more, it could even be argued that in several cases the quality of the relationship between teacher and student significantly enhanced the research project and hence created an open and more favourable context, particularly for the interviews. In response to the above question, the dual role of the researcher did not seem to hinder but rather enable participants to share their thoughts and observations.

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<sup>4</sup> See section 3.2. for a more detailed discussion on this.

#### 5.1.4. Instruments

Various instruments played key parts in this research. Overall, the validity and reliability of the instruments in this study find support in comparing data with results in other research projects. It was observed that many hypotheses based on studies using different instruments or a different procedure were found to be supported, and were often concluded to be statistically significant.<sup>5</sup>

Admittingly, one always seeks to refine and improve the instruments or the manner in which data is gathered. Such a process is inherent to a research project, and this study is no exception. Some of these improvements, such as family accessibility, were beyond the physical scope of this research, while others, given the benefit of hindsight, raised areas that could be addressed differently in future studies.<sup>6</sup> A specific issue that needs more exploration is, for example, the three principles of moral responsibility as identified by Warton and Goodnow.<sup>7</sup>

Given some of the practical and structural shortcomings, it must be underlined that this study did render data that can be considered reliable. As already pointed out, this is supported by comparing results of other studies, but also cross test comparison within this study endorses this point. Furthermore, size of the population, the level of understanding and clear focus of the participants have contributed to achieving this aim as well. Collectively, these points construct a firm foundation to examine the research aims set out for this study and as such provide a valid context to contribute to the wider discussion on moral development.

### **5.2. *Discussion of the findings***

Having discussed the population, the researcher and the instruments of the study, the focus will now turn to the actual findings as reported in this

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<sup>5</sup> For further examples see section 4.4.

<sup>6</sup> See for more detailed examples section 2.5.3.1.

<sup>7</sup> Warton and Goodnow, 1991. See also section 2.4.2.

research. This will be done in five sections; family structure, parental styles, culture, silent moral argument, and moral / religious knowledge.

### 5.2.1. Family structure

This research examined whether family structure has a measurable effect on the development of moral responsibility. Even though the fact of broken families affects large groups of the population in the UK today, few researchers have explored a possible link between family structure and moral development. Coleman and Henry point out that one in four children are from divorced families.<sup>8</sup> In this research sample, thirty six percent of the participants indicated that they were from a broken family. This means that the present sample is significantly higher than the average measured in Coleman and Henry's research. This study observed that authoritarian families were most likely to be families with 'mum and step dad'. The most permissive family structure is 'dad only'. One must note, however, that the latter sub-group was very small in number and therefore significant statistical conclusions cannot be drawn. It is interesting to mention that some research, such as the one conducted by Walker and Henning, suggests that children feel increasingly more content when they are with only their father rather than only with their mother.<sup>9</sup>

From the point of view of moral development, it would be interesting to research this area in more detail in a future study. Such an examination could also include other important variables, such as economic status or the father's involvement in the child's life. Such a project could include parental styles at home as well. Within that context it would be interesting to explore whether the data generated by this study regarding permissive broken families of 'dad's only' is representative. The fact that in this study 'Mum only' families scored higher on the authoritative scale than the intact families came somewhat as a surprise. For example, a frequent conclusion from studies looking at interactions between parents and children is that children in divorced (particularly single mother) families record lower levels of well-

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<sup>8</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Walker and Henning, 1997. See also Larson et al., 1994 and Meyer and Garasky, 1993.

being.<sup>10</sup> Also, Smetana et al. observed that particularly in early adolescents single parent families exhibited poorer communication patterns, which is clearly not in line with authoritative parenting.<sup>11</sup>

However, a closer look at the population does provide the researcher with some possible reasons for the findings in this study. To start with, the two interviews following the questionnaires showed that the participants have different levels of responsibility at home. Reflecting on this, the participants often indicated that the communication with their mother was more open within those set boundaries. Because of their increased level of responsibility they felt more part of the decision making process in the family. The latter point is supported by other studies such as Hanson's and that of Hetherington and Clingempeel.<sup>12</sup> Related to this is the issue of coping and overcoming limitations within the family context. This is particularly illustrated by the relationship between single mothers and older children. For example, the interviews underlined that many single mothers were understood to give more information to and rely more on their older children. It was clear that they valued the adolescent's insights and help with the younger children. This finding is in line with Smetana et al.'s observation that communication in single parent families improved by mid-adolescence.<sup>13</sup>

Sometimes there was evidence of a higher level of interaction due to loneliness. Although not examined specifically within this research and only supported in a limited way by the results of the interviews, one could hypothesise that the style of parenting might be related to the type of difficulties experienced before the marriage break up. For instance, as a parent, one could be highly motivated to change the prior situation and therefore make a conscious effort to invest in the life of the children by taking more time to listen, discuss and take into account their point of view. It could also be argued that the perception of the parenting style in this subgroup could be gender, age and personality related. Particularly if the adolescent is an individual who wants to help out and gets a sense of pride through this role

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Amato and Keith, 1991; Parish, 1990; Cohen, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Smetana et al., 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Hanson, 1988; Hetherington and Clingempeel, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Smetana et al., 1991.

under the authority of the mother, one can perhaps expect higher levels of moral responsibility with authoritarian parents. It is clear from this information that this study generated insufficient specific data to help deepen our understanding of the relationship between parental style and family structure. It does, however, highlight several interesting areas that are still unanswered and as such can be seen as a valuable stepping stone for the formation of future research projects.

#### 5.2.1.1. The variable 'Family structure' in this study

On the basis of the data in this research it is concluded that family structure is not a statistically significant predictor of the development of moral responsibility. Because of this outcome, examination of this variable was discontinued after the first part of the study. Rather than suggesting that only a statistically significant outcome warrants further study, the researcher came to the conclusion that the developed instruments were actually insufficiently appropriate to explore the complex issues related to this topic. Since the relationship between family structure and the development of moral responsibility is a key focus of this research, it is important to discuss it in more detail.

Illustrating this level of complexity, Buchanan et al. point out that divorce is an ongoing event categorised by various levels of negative experiences.<sup>14</sup> It is very likely that the research method of this study with a single measuring point insufficiently captures these experiences. This notion is supported by research suggesting that effects of a divorce experience become apparent at different stages in a person's life.<sup>15</sup> Divorce is also complex in the sense that there are many different types of contacts possible between children and their parents after the marriage break up. This research observed, for example, that an adolescent of a 'broken family' might see his father during the weekend only. However, for these participants this could add up to more quality time with their dad than for those living in intact families where the father is continually busy at work. And then there is also

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<sup>14</sup> Buchanan et al., 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Hetherington, 1993; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1990.

the severely negative family situation where a divorce creates a sense of welcome relief, and only then is the adolescent enabled to develop his own identity. Both these examples illustrate not only the complexity of the divorce experience but also its possible influence on development of moral responsibility. A regular visit with the natural father might constitute a more meaningful relationship than a daily contact with a stepfather. Furthermore, the quality of this time could form a more solid basis for the growth of moral development than many adolescents get in an intact family. In other words, the quality of the relationship is very important. It is precisely these issues of process and complexity which make research into the effects of the broken family experience so challenging.

#### 5.2.1.2. Future research

Summing up the points discussed in relation to the research questions, one cannot conclude that this research project has made a significant statistical contribution to the overall purpose of gaining a more detailed understanding of moral responsibility in relation to family structure. However, the study does underline certain patterns between the different family structures, and by doing so raises issues for potential future studies. For example, one could explore in more detail how the personality of an adolescent affects levels of moral responsibilities and whether such increased responsibilities help them to grow morally or whether their sense of duty is the main motivation. One could also examine how levels of the mother's dependence on the adolescent help create an environment for moral growth. Furthermore, this research also raises valuable and significant future research questions emphasising the need to develop instruments that address the complexity of this research area. For example, it highlights the need to appreciate more clearly the many factors creating a content family. As discussed above, it seems that this has not always been given its due weight in recent research projects. Therefore, the questions raised in this research support the need for a more extensive research project aiming at a comprehensive understanding of the complex effects of broken families on moral growth. Ideally, it seems that one would greatly benefit from a longer



research period with the possibility to examine the relationship between family structure and moral development from different angles than was possible with the instruments used in this study.

### 5.2.2. Parental styles

This study examined the possible link between parental discipline styles and moral responsibility. By doing so, it addresses a research area yet insufficiently explored. Three roughly equal groups of parental styles were recorded. The participants who perceived their parents to be permissive were slightly larger in number than the other two groups. Out of the three groups, participants with authoritative parents scored highest in the Moral Responsibility Test. This result should not come as a surprise since research has consistently reported on this link between authoritative parenting and higher levels of moral reasoning.<sup>16</sup> Also, the data gathered in the focus interviews with participants of perceived authoritative parents confirmed Walker and Taylor's description of supportive interactions, which is understood to enhance moral reasoning.<sup>17</sup> In short, this research confirms that authoritative parenting styles potentially create the best environment for the adolescent to develop his understanding of moral responsibility.

#### 5.2.2.1. Permissive parenting style

With regard to the permissive parenting style, Smetana found that this could limit moral growth significantly.<sup>18</sup> The present study comes to a similar conclusion. Comparing the data of the questionnaires with that generated in the focus interviews, several observations were made which are worth mentioning at this point. For example, the researcher observed that a heightened level of making one's own moral decisions placed the adolescent on more equal terms with their parents. Related to this, enforcement of moral rules was relatively rare. Furthermore, if the participant was to be morally corrected the discussion was characterised by a higher expectation of

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<sup>16</sup> Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c; Pratt and Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1995b; Walker, 1996; Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>17</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> Smetana, 1995b.

explanations as to why their parents regarded their actions to be wrong. Added to this, the participants were much more comfortable to challenge their parents' viewpoint or demands. On the basis of her results, Smetana suggests that these kinds of factors and dynamics at home explain why there is a wider range of moral reasoning among children of permissive families.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the same environment can encourage some adolescents to take responsibility by making the right choices, while others use their freedom to string one poor moral decision to another. The present sample of participants with permissive parents concludes that this style of parenting is more likely to be detrimental rather than constructive for understanding moral responsibility.

There is no specific research evidence in this study to explain fully why this is the case. However, one could suggest that the wider social environment has an influential role. For example, if the question is asked as to who the 'moral teachers' are besides the parents, one might gain better insight into this identified group. It is likely that the sub-culture within which the adolescent mixes outside the home fulfils this role. The researcher's knowledge of these participants, as a teacher, underlines this possibility that influences outside the family are strong. Many of these students have an active life on the 'street corners' and are well connected in separate groups of youth. The present data does not enable the researcher to examine such dynamics in more detail, which means there is insufficient research material available to support further conclusive remarks. However, a future study with such a specific focus would endorse Walker's suggestion to direct research on developing more sophisticated understandings of the impacts of different peer contexts in relation to parental support structures at home.<sup>20</sup> This bigger picture of moral development is complex given the many aspects and influences of today's society. Nevertheless, this study has provided potential future studies examining moral development within a permissive family with a

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<sup>19</sup> Smetana, 1995b.

<sup>20</sup> Walker, 1996.

partial answer, and has also given plausible suggestions to explain the range of moral levels discussed by Smetana.<sup>21</sup>

#### 5.2.2.2. Authoritarian parenting style

Whereas there is a significant statistical difference between permissive parenting and the authoritarian and authoritative style, no such difference is apparent between the latter two in this study. This is unlike other studies where authoritarian parenting was found to be significantly less beneficial, particularly for boys.<sup>22</sup> Although the focus interview highlighted that boys struggled more with authoritarian parents than girls did, this was not recorded as a result comparing PAQ and the Moral Responsibility Test. A closer examination of the present findings suggests that this is particularly due to the variable of ethnicity, and as such has become a catalyst. For example, Asian participants scored their parents more as authoritarian than any other parental style, whereas White participants perceived their parents as predominately permissive. The authoritarian parental style in this sample is therefore particularly characterised by the meaning Asian participants give to authoritarianism. From the data gathered, this study observes that their experience of authoritarian parents is quite different from that of White participants. Consequently, comparisons with previous studies such as that conducted by Boyes and Allan are only of limited value, given the fact that the samples have rather different worldviews.<sup>23</sup> The potential influence and extent of ethnicity in relation to the points raised above will therefore be discussed in more detail in this chapter under the heading 'culture'.

#### 5.2.2.3. Context for moral discussion or conflict

Power's 'Developmental Environment Coding System' was used to code the responses of the participants during the focus interview. The particular strength of this instrument is its ability to evaluate the constructive and destructive aspects of a moral discussion. It is interesting to start by

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<sup>21</sup> Smetana, 1995b.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Boyes and Allan, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Boyes and Allan, 1993; Rudy, Grusec and Wolfe, 1999.

noting the findings of this study with regard to the context for the moral discussions. Most participants said that a TV programme initiated the discussion. The role of siblings or own wrongdoing was significantly lower. One could argue not only that the context in which the discussion takes place, but also the information provided, plays an important role in the nature of the discussion. For example, the TV can function as a sort of discussion 'partner' who raises points but does not per se listen to your responses and continually moves to new participants. The focus interview highlights that many of the moral discussions take place in relation to what is on TV and while watching TV. Consequently, many discussions are rather brief because the TV programme goes on. Very few participants observed that they would then pick up the subject at a later point to discuss the issue in more detail. It is also interesting to observe that participants rarely reported moral discussions during family meal times. This is partly explained by the fact that it is not unusual for a family to eat while watching TV. This research identified that a moral conflict situation is much more likely to be the direct result of the participant being caught doing something wrong or raising the issue with the parent about something that they disagree with. The TV plays only a minor role in such situations. The researcher wants to highlight that this understanding of the context for a moral discussion or conflict helps us understand the link between parental support and the adolescent's development of moral responsibility. The frequency of a conflict shows that participants of perceived authoritarian parents are most frequently engaged in a moral conflict situation. Compared with the results of the Moral Responsibility Test, participants who score high are, overall, less likely to have regular moral conflict with their parents.

Understanding the context for the moral discussion or conflict is important since this is very different from many other studies examining moral development in families. Powers' own study is a case in point.<sup>24</sup> She conducted her research in a rather structured setting where adolescents and their parents were observed in a room having a hypothetical discussion. The advantage of this arrangement is clarity for the researcher, and as such the

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<sup>24</sup> Powers, 1988.

sessions generated data that could be specifically coded by the DECS guidelines.<sup>25</sup> The disadvantage, however, is that this whole process does not take place in the home, neither is it assessed first hand, i.e. as the conflict took place for the first time. Walker and Taylor sought to address this issue by real-life dilemmas generated by the child.<sup>26</sup> They claim that real-life dilemmas 'may have provided heightened representativeness to normal interactions'.<sup>27</sup> However, they qualified this by acknowledging that day to day conversations at home are not the same as '1-hour sampling discussions in the lab'.<sup>28</sup> As is discussed above, the findings in this research conclude that such day to day conversations are indeed very different.

This study has therefore sought to use the detailed DECS structure to assess moral discussions and conflicts at home as the adolescents relay them during the focus interview. The strength of this approach is that the data obtained is firmly rooted in the actual moral discussion or conflict. The limitation is that the researcher gets the information second hand and therefore is not able to use all the codes constructed by Powers. In other words, although it must be recognised that some issues are uncovered, not all issues are handled in depth. For example, as far as the sharing perspective is concerned, the focus interview generated insufficiently precise information to code it according to the DECS guidelines set out by Powers.<sup>29</sup> Despite these limitations, several interesting findings in this study have contributed to a better understanding of the wider issue of moral development and have also raised crucial questions for future research. In this sense, the DECS has shown to be a powerful instrument and a clear guide for the purposes set out by this research project. And this in turn creates the proper context for generating more detailed discussion of findings while linking them to previous research.

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<sup>25</sup> Walker, 1996; Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991, p.280.

<sup>28</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991, p. 280.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix G.

#### 5.2.2.4. Moral communication with individual parents

When examining communication patterns between child and individual parents, Parikh found that there is a stronger correlation between the mother and child moral stage development than that of father and child.<sup>30</sup> The data of the present research supports this and highlights a higher frequency of the mother's involvement during moral discussions and conflict situations. To start with, participants who live with their 'dad only' record the low level of authoritative parental style (20%). Those who live with their 'mum only' scored thirty percent. This is a difference, but it must be noted that there were very few participants who stayed with their father as their only caregiver. This will of course have influenced the figures. However, when this issue was discussed during the focus interview a similar and more persuasive picture emerged. Although some said that they had an open and supportive relationship with their father, the majority would prefer to discuss moral matters with their mother. The reasons for this varied covering explanations such as the personality of the father, his demanding work, or cultural expectations. In short, the relationship between mother and adolescent was considered by most participants to be more open and accessible, which resulted in a better context for discussions about moral responsibility. Given the sensitivity of some of the issues during such discussions or conflicts, the relationship with the mother was mostly characterised by a deeper level of trust and a higher level of understanding. Again, this is in line with Parikh's study which observed that the mother is generally perceived to be much more approachable, understanding and trusted. Therefore on the basis of the finding in this study, it is concluded that the parental style of the mother is understood to be a more significant indicator for the level of moral responsibility than that of the father. The data from the interview showed that the quality of the relationship between mother and adolescent forms a very important basis for moral growth in the sense that the adolescent is taught to reason his own ideas.

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<sup>30</sup> Parikh, 1980.

On the basis of the information gathered through the interview it can also be concluded that there is a difference between moral discussion and moral conflict when it comes to parental style and involvement. Although the father might be more distant during the moral discussion time, his role during the moral conflict becomes much more evident. The participants in this study saw their father more as the one who lays down the boundaries. In some cases this was interpreted as a potential threat, while in other cases he was more the final resort when agreement was not realised with other members of the family. This pattern of the father's role of discipline was, as expected, particularly accentuated among the participants who perceived their parents to be authoritarian. Many of them felt that at such times it was better to simply agree rather than try to argue their way out of the situation. The 'I will fail anyway' attitude was an important reason for staying quiet and agreeing with whatever was expected of them. It must be noted that few of the participants who related to their father in this manner felt that they had learnt much except to try to avoid a similar situation. In other words, raising their moral responsibility was translated more in a sense of 'oughtness' rather than developing their sense of cognitive understanding and self-motivation. Because of the ethnic variable of this research, several questions could be asked in relation to these participants and research conducted in countries in the Far East.<sup>31</sup> This issue is addressed in the next section on the influence of culture on development of moral responsibility.

Participants who perceived their fathers to be permissive displayed a broader range of reactions. Whereas several observed that their father was often too busy or just not the kind of person to discuss such matters with, others felt that their father was very approachable and understanding. The focus interviews highlighted that particularly girls showed a wider range of relationship with their fathers. Walker and Henning discuss this issue in some depth, specifically giving attention to the comparison between single- and two-parent families.<sup>32</sup> Given their conclusions, it is plausible to argue that part of the issue in this study is related to the high level of single parents or

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<sup>31</sup> Grusec, Rudy, and Martini, 1997; Rudy, Grusec, and Wolfe, 1999; Schwartz, 1994.

<sup>32</sup> Walker and Henning, 1997.

blended families in this sample. For instance, studies examining single parent families differ considerably in whether children cope better in the custody of the same-sex parent.<sup>33</sup> However, it must be noted that despite its detailed analysis, Walker and Hemming's research is not conclusive and suggests that a longitudinal study is needed to explore this range in responses more clearly.<sup>34</sup> Based on the evidence in this research, such a future study would certainly be a beneficial area for further exploration, especially when paying particular attention to the gender variable in permissive single parent families.

The participants who perceived their parents to be authoritative recorded the most constructive discussions and conflict situations with their father, and as such supported research discussed earlier.<sup>35</sup> However, the interview data suggests the role of the father still to be markedly less influential than that of the mother. Work commitments and personality were given as important reasons for this. Also, the high percentage of single parent and blended families in this sample is likely to have influenced the perception of the role of the father in this research. These findings support Cohen's observation that single-parent families score lower levels of family cohesion than two-parent families.<sup>36</sup> On the basis of the information collected in this study such a situation would arise because the father is not much part of the participant's life or because the relationship is a strained one due to the divorce situation.

#### 5.2.2.5. Emotional outcome

This study found that the emotional outcome of a moral discussion or conflict is also related to the various parental styles. In particular, the participants who judged their parents to be permissive felt significantly more negative after a moral discussion or conflict situation. Within this group it is interesting to note that positive conflict situations were rare. Both these findings suggest that the environment in such situations is not constructive for

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Amato and Keith, 1991; Downey and Powell, 1993; Welsh et al, 1991.

<sup>34</sup> Walker and Henning, 1997.

<sup>35</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Cohen, 1994.



the development of moral responsibility. It can therefore be concluded that this data adds to the wider body of findings that the permissive parenting style is not the most constructive environment for moral growth.<sup>37</sup> As expected, participants of authoritative parents recorded more positive discussions and conflicts, as well as the lowest levels of negative emotions in regard to these types of encounter with their parents.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that although the participants of authoritarian parents record a high level of negative emotions in relation to moral discussions, contrary to expectations this is not the case in relation to moral conflicts.<sup>39</sup> A closer look at this issue suggests that these figures are rather influenced by the cultural expectations within the Asian families. Whereas within that setting a moral discussion is valued, entering a conflict situation (certainly regarding a moral issue) is regarded as disrespectful, and, by a considerable number, even unthinkable. When this was discussed in the focus interview some participants' reactions were noteworthy. Most of them would smile when the question regarding moral discussions with parents was asked and explained that they would not even look at (particularly) their father during such conversations, let alone voice their own thoughts. The data gathered in this study suggests that these expectations have also affected the emotions of the adolescent in the sense that such an attitude was accepted and valued to the extent that this also communicated a wider understanding of protection. This, in turn, provided them with a sense of being emotionally content within the relationship. In other words, concepts such as discipline and authoritarian parenting mean something quite different in Asian cultures than what Western culture based studies examined in the studies looked at thus far. This issue of ethnic influence will be discussed in more detail under the next heading.

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<sup>37</sup> Baumrind, 1991c; Smetana, 1995.

<sup>38</sup> Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Baumrind, 1991b; Glasgow et al., 1997.

### **5.2.3. Culture**

This study found that ethnicity is a significant factor influencing the way moral responsibility is taught, experienced and evaluated by adolescents. In line with the hypothesis that Asians would score higher in the Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test, this study concluded that ethnicity is a significant predictor of moral development with Asians scoring statistically significantly higher. These questionnaire results were confirmed by the focus interview where Asian participants selected more of the prompt cards as 'definitely moral'.<sup>40</sup> On the basis of the data generated it can be concluded that Asians with perceived authoritative parents score the highest moral responsibility levels. They received more support and their families were characterised by open relationships and a relatively low level of intense moral disagreement. However, it is interesting to note that moral responsibility levels of Asians with authoritarian parents are slightly higher than those of White participants with authoritative parents. This finding contradicts the established understanding of the positive effects of authoritative parenting styles in relation to authoritarian styles as discussed under the previous heading.<sup>41</sup> There the researcher stated that results of the focus interview show that Asian participants evaluate their authoritarian parents differently from their White peers of similar families. Given these interesting statistical results it is important to discuss this matter in more detail.

#### **5.2.3.1. Parental styles**

Research examining parental styles in cross-cultural studies concluded that Asians were likely to understand the authoritarian style differently from that of White adolescents.<sup>42</sup> The present findings confirm this conclusion. This difference is related to the understanding of socialisation.<sup>43</sup> Whereas in an individualistic culture the adolescent's autonomy is valued, according to Markus and Kitayama a collective culture encourages an individual to align

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>41</sup> Baumrind, 1991b; Pratt and Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1995; Walker, 1996; Walker and Taylor, 1991.

<sup>42</sup> Chao, 1994; Farver and Shin, 1997; Rudy, Grusec and Wolfe, 1999.

<sup>43</sup> See for example, Osterweil and Nagano, 1991.

himself with the larger group.<sup>44</sup> This research also confirmed that Asian participants were more ready to see themselves as part of a group. In line with Fuligni's findings, there was also a stronger sense that they needed to help any member of that group who was in need.<sup>45</sup> Most Asian participants were very much aware of these expectations. When they perceived to come from an authoritarian family, such awareness was accentuated. In line with Rudy's sample, the Asian participants expressed that to be part of this kind of authoritarian family was certainly not considered a negative experience.<sup>46</sup> Participants would often talk about a deeper sense of belonging and understanding that the rules and expectations were for their own good. The lack of warmth, affection, negativity, and higher levels of anger so often associated with authoritarianism<sup>47</sup>, were much less referred to by the Asian participants reflecting on their home life. However, Rudy et al.'s explanation of the extent of acceptance of this kind of authority in collective cultures did not reflect the Asian participants' observations of their families.<sup>48</sup>

#### 5.2.3.2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation influence

It must be underlined that since this study only looks at 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asians, direct comparison with the discussed research projects contrasting individualist and collectivist cultures is of limited value. For instance, the 'in between cultures' experience would be the possible reason for the high level of authoritarian parenting style among the Asian sample in this study. In other words, more Western values are being embraced. Such a process was affirmed by responses during the focus interview. While comparing the UK with the country of parental origin, many participants observed that the UK is more open and less strict. Overall, the interviewees favoured this. In fact, many felt they would follow UK standards for their future families rather than model on the expectations of their families abroad. However, the data gathered in this research shows that what Asians labelled as open or strict

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<sup>44</sup> Markus and Kitayama, 1991.

<sup>45</sup> Fuligni, 2001. See also, Miller et al., 1990; Shweder et al., 1987.

<sup>46</sup> Grusec and Wolfe, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> See for example, Dix and Reinhold, 1991 and Hastings and Grusec, 1998.

<sup>48</sup> Rudy et al., 1999.

was perceived differently by their White peers. To start with, the role of the father and mother were often quite distinct in Asian families. For example, a significant group of participants said their father would only get involved in a moral discipline situation when there was a serious disagreement and the other family members could not solve it successfully. A common picture provided by the interviews is one of an authoritarian father who establishes a clear context for what is considered right and wrong. However, participants would often describe their mother as authoritative, engaging in many moral discussions with her child. It must be noted that the power and therefore influence of the mother must not be underestimated. Many participants felt that they could discuss certain moral issues with their mother, but at the end of the day her final word was to be obeyed mainly because the father would back her up.

#### 5.2.3.3. The respect issue

A point regarding 'the respect issue' is important at this stage of our discussion. The concept of respect was formulated quite differently within the Asian sub-sample. It was observed that respect and the level of UK values held were related. Those families with higher emphasis on Western values discussed moral issues more freely. On the other hand, in the families where values of their cultural origin were favoured more, moral issues were perceived to be sensitive or simply unacceptable to discuss. As a result, such discussions did not take place because it would be interpreted as rude towards one's parents and therefore shameful for the family. Some observed that this can lead to a situation where all communication breaks down and where the father does not speak to the adolescent any more because of their disobedience. The interviews also show that this issue of respect is linked to the position of the adolescent within the family, which is in line with Husain and O'Brien's observations.<sup>49</sup> For example, several girls felt a great sense of, what they would call, the moral responsibility to be seen to be good. Setting an example was perceived to be more important, particularly as one became

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<sup>49</sup> Husain and O'Brien, 1999.

increasingly older.<sup>50</sup> Also, moral wrongs of boys were forgiven more quickly than wrongdoings by girls. Nevertheless, this research revealed that participants make it very clear that they saw this as an acceptable way of discipline and structure, and, in fact, most believed it helped them to achieve their own goals. Despite these differences nearly all Asians said that moral questions about sex were not to be discussed with their parents. Friends at school or relatives would be more open with them, but never parents. It was hypothesised that Asian participants would record lower levels of moral conflicts than their White peers. Due to the respect for those in authority and expectations generated by a shame culture this hypothesis was clearly supported by a statistically significant result.

#### 5.2.3.4. Future research

Cross-cultural research has established that parental styles are understood differently, depending on cultural orientation. This research has confirmed this to be the case with 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asian participants. However, the findings in this study also highlight that more Western values are accepted, resulting in an 'in between' culture holding both Eastern and Western moral responsibility systems. As mentioned earlier in this study, specific information on the Asian population in the UK in relation to the development of moral growth is limited. As a result, there is still much to explore within the culturally diverse boundaries of Britain. Future research could examine more extensively how 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Asians make sense of their heritage and the British society they are part of. For example, the question could be asked whether, in time, understanding of moral responsibility remains distinctively Asian. One could also explore which moral responsibilities might hold on for longer and why this is the case. Specific attention could be given to the gender issues in such a research project. For instance, will the role of the father's undisputed authority continue, or are the fathers of the future going to fulfil a different role within their families? And if so, does this mean they would resort to different ways of teaching their children right from wrong?

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<sup>50</sup> Shweder et al., 1987.

#### 5.2.4. Silent moral argument

This study examined whether adolescents actively avoided certain types of moral arguments with their parents. This question was particularly explored during the focus interview. More than half of the participants felt that this occurred either 'frequently' or 'sometimes', which is in line with the prediction that 'silent moral arguments' take place in all families. More specifically, it was hypothesised that participants with authoritarian parents most frequently kept their disagreements to themselves. The main reason for the lack of disclosure was that they felt that they were not listened to and/or unable to argue their own point of view. The lack of understanding and possible punishment created a detrimental environment for either a moral discussion or conflict situation. This hypothesis was found to be true particularly among the white population in the sample. The focus interview highlighted clearly that interviewees felt that perceived lack of parental support and lack of opportunity to explain their point of view were major barriers and made them reluctant to make known their own ideas on a given moral issue. Looking at individual topics it became clear that certain moral issues were avoided if at all possible. This means that the findings of this study support Smetana's conclusion that conflict situations are seldom related to topics such as religion, politics, sex or drugs.<sup>51</sup> Especially the latter two were moral topics participants would rather not discuss with their parents.

This study also shows that the reasons for a silent moral argument vary. The most obvious reason suggested is reluctance to talk about sensitive issues.<sup>52</sup> This was clearly the case for some of the participants of this sample. Especially participants who had authoritative parents observed that 'sometimes' they avoided moral disagreement and gave this as their main reason for not talking. In line with the studies seeking to understand youth culture, another reason was related to the generation gap between the parent and the adolescent.<sup>53</sup> Several participants expressed that they felt that their parents would not understand their points, and trying to talk about

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<sup>51</sup> Smetana, 1996.

<sup>52</sup> Smetana, 1996.

<sup>53</sup> Coleman and Henry, 1999; Mueller, 1994.

them would confuse matters and bring about unnecessary misunderstanding. For instance, according to many participants, a few drugs related questions could make their parents worry unnecessarily. They observed that friends and school introduced them to the existence of drugs and helped them understand that people had different ideas about it. Although they emphasised that they would never want to use drugs themselves their awareness of the issue in society gave them a fuller understanding of the situation, which allowed them to view the topic in a more complex way. Consequently, this level of understanding generated questions. The reason to avoid talking about the moral issues was in this case not so much embarrassment or total disagreement with values communicated with their parents, but more an understanding that their world was different from that of their parents. For Asian participants there was also another reason why they felt unable to discuss certain issues. This was related to the culturally bound understanding of respect and potential fear of shaming the name of the family. Most of them attributed this to their cultural background, expressing that certain things are just not said within the presence of parents. Viewpoints about sexual behaviour would be a good example of this. The idea of bringing shame on the family name played a major part in their reasoning. Being an embarrassment to the parents (certainly publicly) is considered unacceptable at all times and therefore discussion about certain matters will always be avoided.<sup>54</sup>

In conclusion, this study highlighted that there are indeed specific moral issues many adolescents avoid to discussing with their parents. It was observed that participants of authoritarian parents register higher silent moral discussions than participants of any other parental style group. Regarding the nature of the silent moral discussion this research identified that there are distinct reasons for the nature of the silent moral argument. The cultural background is understood to have a measurable influence on the frequency and nature of the silent moral argument. The present research supports Gilani's conclusion that the wishes of the parents take priority.<sup>55</sup> As predicted,

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<sup>54</sup> Hofstede, 1983; Kochanska and Aksan, 1995; Rudy et al., 1999.

<sup>55</sup> Gilani, 1995.

the Asian participants, regardless of parental style at home, justified their moral responsibility more in terms of related interpersonal responsiveness than the White participants.

#### 5.2.4.1. Future research

The findings in this study are also important for potential future research projects. As far as the researcher is aware, little work has been done on this aspect of moral development. As this study has shown, participants do keep moral thoughts to themselves for various reasons. However, several questions remain unanswered. For instance, to what extent does the lack of sharing one's moral viewpoints with one's parents influence overall moral growth? Or, in how far is this lack of sharing a normal part of the rebellion phase during adolescence?<sup>56</sup> With regard to the parental styles, could one identify whether holding quietly to one's own views becomes the foundation for changing taught values in an individual's own future family? In relation to ethnic background, the area of moral development is still under-researched. Therefore, one could, for example, explore the difference between various ethnic groups. Within this study 'Asian' refers to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation British Asians who came originally from Southern Asia. However, this group is also characterised by diversity. It would also be interesting to examine how 2<sup>nd</sup> generation sub-groups differ from each other. For instance, what role does the country of their parents play in how the participants understand moral responsibility? Related to this is the importance of the extended family. One could explore whether the presence of their extended family in the UK has an influence on the level of sharing moral issues with parents. If this is not the case, can one identify substitutes that the adolescent turns to?

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<sup>56</sup> See for example, Herbert, 2003.



### **5.3. Religious knowledge and moral responsibility**

This study has argued that understanding moral responsibility must be linked with the process of moral integration. The aim of this section is to establish whether religious knowledge actively shapes and heightens the level of moral responsibility. The data gathering for this question took place in the final stage of the research. Of the thirty-five participants selected for the focus interview, two-thirds said they were religious. With regard to the three religions represented (Christian, Muslim and Hindu), Muslims formed the largest group. It is observed that the interview yielded two levels of data. On one level participants used language that showed they were influenced by their religion in the sense that it provided them with reference points to decide right from wrong. This could be labelled indirect evidence of a religious framework. One could argue as to how important religious guidance was in their thinking. In other words, the information in the interview communicates more a sense of religious tradition than religious conviction. Consequently, it was evident that the extent of religious thinking guiding moral decisions was limited. On another level this study showed clear evidence of a link between cognitive moral reasoning and the professed faith, so much so that participants repeatedly gave religious reasons for why they considered a certain action right or wrong. Blasi talks about a moral identity, where a person will deliberately seek such identity and experience a responsibility for its correctness and truth.<sup>57</sup> This study found this to be true for the participants who were deeply committed to their faith. Their understanding of moral responsibility was firmly rooted and explicitly guided, i.e. 'integrated' as Veyne puts it, by what they considered to be God's (Allah's) will.<sup>58</sup> They believe that all their actions and thoughts are known, and the link with the future reward after death provides them with a strong intrinsic motivation to do right.

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<sup>57</sup> Blasi, 1983.

<sup>58</sup> Veyne, 1987.

It was hypothesised that religious commitment and personal effort towards religious goals significantly helps the participant to explain their moral responsibility. On the basis of the interview data, this thesis has found significant support for structural reasoning among the participants who considered themselves committed to a particular faith. This link between understanding and moral responsibility could be examined more closely by testing this level of understanding in relation to moral action. The present research has generated insufficient specific data to fully comment on this link.

### 5.3.1. Future research

Admittedly, this sub-variable has only been addressed in a limited way within this research. However, it has highlighted that faith knowledge structures can play a significant part within the formation of moral responsibility. As such, this study could be seen as a stepping stone to the bigger picture of moral development and explore how these two processes connect and support each other. For example, one could explore whether there are specific isolated moral beliefs that are directly related to another religious belief and how it is related to ethnicity.<sup>59</sup> Future studies could also examine whether an individual integrates a moral belief quicker if this is linked with a religious belief and which aspects of religion enhance moral growth. On a more broader scale, research could focus on the ways religious teachers or guides enable a person to integrate religious values, and how these teaching styles affect that person's ability to develop their moral responsibility. A specific question that could be asked within this context is whether the individual is morally responsible because he wants to follow the expectations or because he feels he needs (and perhaps even is forced) to do so. Examining such questions within different cultures could also shed light on how the decision process is influenced by wrongdoing of family members or of influential members of the faith community. The fascinating dynamics of this research area in relation to understanding the development of moral responsibility are complex but research should be encouraged since

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<sup>59</sup> Since the data gathering for this study, Walker (2003) published an article in which he suggests that this could be a possibility.

countless news bulletins repeatedly show that this process influences millions of people in countries all over the world.

#### **5.4. *Purpose and relationship***

This chapter discussed the findings of this research. In the process, it has become clear that the bigger picture of moral development is not only one that could be explored from all sorts of angles, but also that there are still many questions left unanswered. The present research is particularly relevant within this wider field for its quest to examine the impact of different contexts on the development of moral responsibility. By observing patterns within families, ethnic groups, and individual viewpoints, this research has improved the research quest by developing a more refined understanding of how an individual learns and practices right from wrong. For the researcher, this is what makes this particular topic exciting and rewarding to explore. At the heart of it all is not a grey mass of people, but individuals who all, one by one, need to work out what is right and wrong. This process is continuous, complex, but also could literally mean the difference between life and death. This section will be concluded with a final possible future direction for research, based on the underlining pattern evident in all the different sections discussed above, and thus transcending any particular research question as outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

The questionnaires, but even more so the interviews, highlighted that many factors have various degrees of influence on the moral development of the individual. As is shown in the extensive body of literature on the topic, these factors are also interrelated. Listening to the participants, the researcher became increasingly aware that two key factors seemed to fulfil main reference points for the individuals taking part in this study. These reference points reached beyond ethnicity, parental styles or religious commitment, though all these variables were clearly connected to these reference points and in many cases formed the structure within which such influences grew in importance. These two reference points could be best described as purpose and relationship. 'Purpose' refers to a sense of

direction. Questions such as 'why am I doing this?' or 'what am I trying to achieve by my actions?' are examples of this reference point. 'Relationship' refers more directly to a reference point that has an emotional dimension. Questions such as 'who will I disappoint if I lie?' or 'does it matter to me if I disappoint this particular person?' illustrate this reference point. When these two dimensions are crossed one has four possible combinations of influence, as can be seen in the figure below.

<p><b>A</b> Low relationship High purpose</p>	<p><b>B</b> High relationship High purpose</p>
<p><b>D</b> Low relationship Low purpose</p>	<p><b>C</b> High relationship Low purpose</p>

*Figure 1: Relationship and purpose directed morality*

Of the four combinations of influence, 'B' is thought of as the most favourable combination. The individual is clearly connected within a network of relationships. Within this context, 'high' is interchangeable with words such as 'positive' and 'constructive'. Added to this supportive network around him the individual is also thinking and making decisions in relation to clear goals he has set for himself. On the other hand, a person with a weak personal network and low level of purpose is perceived to struggle most with formulating moral values and is potentially less supported to make sound moral decisions.

Future studies could test the validity of examining moral development within this model. They could study the interrelation between the two reference points of relationship and purpose. One could hypothesise that purpose is more dependent on relationship than visa versa. Furthermore, one could explore questions related to the different types of relationship. Is it, for instance, possible to argue that one is more significant than the another?

One boy mentioned, for example, how his relationship with his granddad was very important to him. He explained how hard it was for him to do something that would disappoint his granddad. Questions could be raised about how such a relationship differs from that described by another participant when she talked about her desire to obey her God in all aspects of her life. In relation to ethnicity and parental styles this model provides potentially a helpful structure to examine in more detail how authority within the family is understood in terms of supportive relationships. And linked with this, it could establish how these relationships, in turn, provide the individual with a clear moral purpose in life to emulate.

This research was introduced by two stories with two very different endings. To continue to gain a fuller understanding of the road leading up to these completely different decisions much more research is necessary. This research and this model emphasise the need to value life's details that make each individual grow into the person he, or she, will become. Therefore, studies need to continue to focus on the processes that are integrated into the messiness of real life.

# Conclusions

## 6. Conclusions

This research has examined the moral responsibility of adolescents. Introducing this study two stories, with completely different endings, were referred to, illustrating that individuals can make very different moral decisions in life. One of the individuals was called Robert, the young man who killed two 17-year old boys. Following his crime, Robert was arrested and then tried in court. His sister was called upon during the trial as a character witness. She told the jury about the home Robert grew up in.

*When my mother (who was pregnant) was bathing two of her children in the bathtub, father would come in and start to kick her in the stomach, screaming that the baby was not his. This happened more than once. As a result Robert was born three months early. Because of mother's drinking problem Robert had poor health from the day he was born. Even as a baby, but much more so as a little boy, Robert was beaten by both his mum and his dad nearly every day. Mum preferred bamboo sticks. Dad just used his knuckles. At the age of one Robert's jaw was broken. Sometimes, for no apparent reason, dad would load his gun and tell his 'loved' ones they had 30 minutes to hide outside the house. He then hunted his family like animals, promising to shoot anyone he found.*

Validity of legal arguments, such as possible reasons given by the lawyer defending Robert, is for the court to explore and eventually decide on what is considered to be a fair judgement. This story is in many ways extreme. However, as is not unusual, an extreme situation can crystallise important issues more clearly. In this specific case one is profoundly aware that Robert had not received the kind of support and understanding coupled with guidance one would consider beneficial for his moral well being. Furthermore, this story also highlights that one moral action seldom stands on its own, isolated from past and future. Rather it has been influenced by significant others and their commitment to communicate the values of right and wrong.

This research has sought to examine a variety of issues that are perceived to have an influence on moral responsibility in adolescents. By

doing so, it has recognised that the topic of moral education has become increasingly a topic of discussion on various levels within today's society. Engaging at the level of everyday life, and the endless decisions that come with it, this study has focused on the moral discussions and conflict situations within the family. The concluding remarks in relation to this project will be ordered under three separate headings. First, the researcher will return to the big picture and comment on how this study is relevant in relation to other studies in the field. Second, the four research questions and the findings in relation to them are listed. Finally, the researcher concludes with possible future studies that could build on the findings in this research.

### ***6.1. The big picture***

It is acknowledged that the field of moral responsibility goes across many domains and disciplines in psychology. The researcher has explained that this should not be viewed as a weakness but rather as a rich source with which one can connect to gain an ever-increasing understanding as to how individuals develop morally.

This project is placed within the framework formed particularly by Kohlberg's research and understanding of moral stages. The researcher has examined and critically discussed many research projects that have followed the work done by this American scholar several decades ago. The present study distinguishes itself by the combination of the variables at the centre of this project. Although a fair amount of work has been done comparing moral levels with parental styles, relatively few studies have combined this with ethnicity, especially in the UK. Furthermore, thorough research into the two sub-variables, the potential influence of family structure and religion on moral responsibility is reported to be weak. This research is unique in the sense that it brings together these variables with participants at an English school.

Particular implications for policy and practice flowing from this study are seen to be threefold. First, on a research level this study highlights areas that need further study and, as such, the findings of this project could form the basis for formulating future research questions. Second, this study



highlights several issues that are important building stones for the making of policy and the writing of curriculum dealing with issues of moral responsibility. For instance, the question of authority and how various ethnic groups interact with it is an example of how findings in this research could shape the planning and delivering of a citizenship programme. Finally, the researcher understands this project to be important for all those who are prepared to explore the other perspective on what is right and wrong, and how such viewpoints are formulated and shaped by influences around them. One ingredient of a harmonious society is the high level of understanding each other. This study contributes to this important quest by telling the story how a group of adolescents with their different cultural and family backgrounds reason their moral responsibility within everyday situations in their lives.

## **6.2.     *The research questions***

The present study has sought to examine different variables and their influence on moral responsibility. The specific areas of study are formulated in four research questions. This section will list these and the research conclusions in relation to them.

Research question one

**Do parental style, family structure, and cultural background impact on the adolescent's understanding of moral responsibility?**

Using an established instrument to measure moral reasoning scores (DIT), the research found that the present sample of participants can be considered to be comparable with other studies involving adolescents conducted in the field.

Although it was recognised that there are some limiting factors in using the Parental Authority Questionnaire instead of Baumrind's extensive examination process, it can be concluded that Buri's instrument is a significant tool to establish the parental style of the participants' home. Not

only were similar results found similar to those of Buri's original study but parental styles were also often confirmed by the data generated by the focus interview in this study.

It was concluded that out of the three parental styles examined, the authoritative parenting style is understood to create the best environment for the growth of moral responsibility. In this study the authoritarian parental style was not statistically negatively related to authoritative parenting. The research argues that this might be explained by the ethnicity variable where this particular style is judged to have a different effect on moral responsibility. In this sample the weakest basis for moral growth was that of a permissive family home with even a more limiting range than anticipated. It is argued that this might be related to the sub-culture within which many of the adolescents mix outside the school.

In relation to ethnicity, the research observed that Asians scored significantly higher levels of moral responsibility. In fact, it was concluded that the ethnic background is an important predictor for moral responsibility levels within the context of the present sample. This study observed that Asian participants with authoritarian parents score higher levels of moral responsibility than white participants with authoritarian parents. Asian participants who judge their parents to be authoritarian score similar moral responsibility levels to white participants with authoritative parents, whereas white participants with perceived authoritarian parents scored significantly lower than whites with authoritative parents.

In this study the potential influence of family structure on the moral responsibility was also examined. Comparison of moral responsibility scores with family structure as well as parental style showed that the latter is a far better predictor of moral responsibility. A more detailed analysis was done with the permissive parental style. No statistical results were found to suggest that there is an even wider range of moral scores between intact and broken families. Following this outcome, the researcher decided to discontinue exploring the effects of this variable during the interviews following the questionnaires. It is concluded that the tools in this study are

insufficiently sensitive to the variety of factors that influence the dynamics within a broken family.

Research question two

**Within the context of the understanding of moral responsibility in adolescents, how do parents with different parenting styles, family structure and cultural background communicate and formulate parental responsibility during a moral conflict situation at home?**

This research confirms that, in line with other studies in the field, moral discussions do take place between parents and their adolescent children. The participants interviewed, commented that the living room was the most common place for such interactions. It was also noticeable that information provided by the media, particularly the TV, was often understood to be the starting point for moral discussions. However, when the participants talked about moral conflicts they observed that the TV was less influential and the conflict was instead related to the fact they were caught doing something wrong.

The DECS has proven to be a useful instrument to analyse the moral communication at home as relayed by the participants during the interview. Generally speaking, it was clear that the relationship with the mother during such communication was characterised by a higher level of understanding. The father was often seen as more distant but the one who ultimately laid down the rules. This perception was particularly true for Asian participants, but, on the basis of the results in this study, this was not judged by them to be negative.

Comparing the moral discussion between ethnic groups further, Asian participants were not only more conscious of the level of respect they felt they owed their parents within such a context, they were also more likely to admit that certain moral topics were never considered for discussion with their parents. An example of such a topic is a discussion regarding sex. The parental style among Asians had no significant influence on this. However, it must be noted that the Asian participants did see a brother, sister or a

member of the extended family as a valuable conversation partner for such a perceived sensitive topic. A much lower number of moral conflict situations were recorded with Asian participants than with their white peers.

#### Research question three

**How often and to what extent do adolescents avoid discussing their opinion regarding moral responsibility with their parents when they disagree with them? Has the parental style, family structure, or cultural background a measurable influence on the frequency and nature of 'silent' disagreements?**

On the basis of the interview data generated in this research it can be concluded that silent moral arguments take place in all families regardless of parental style or ethnic background. A closer examination showed that particularly participants with perceived authoritarian parents avoid discussing moral topics with their parents. Within this group the highest levels of avoidance were measured with white participants.

In relation to the ethnic variable, participants of Asian background are more likely to keep their moral thoughts to themselves. It is interesting to note, however, that the actual reasons to do so are quite different. Whereas some clearly felt it was important to hide certain things from their parents for punitive reasons, others simply felt that talking about the questions they had would make their parents worry unnecessarily. The latter reason was specifically important for Asian participants who felt that their parents did not fully understand present UK society.

#### Research question four

**In what sense does understanding a knowledge framework enable an adolescent to increase his moral responsibility?**

The research found that participants of a faith structure were able to articulate more clearly their moral identity. In this study this was found to be particularly the case among the conservative Muslims who often used

religious language to explain why they considered something to be right or wrong. It was clear that particularly with this group, though not exclusive to it, integration of their faith deeply influenced their moral thinking.

Religious commitment and personal effort to achieve religious goals was observed to help participants to explain more clearly their understanding of moral responsibility, but it also heightened their desire to do morally good deeds.

### **6.3. *Future research***

With regard to family structure, this research underlines that several factors, such as the reasons for change within this structure and the emotional interdependence of family members, are significant variables.

This research does suggest that there are patterns between family structures. However, instruments need to be developed which are more sensitive to the complex backgrounds and influences of broken families.

The variable of parental style remains an important focus for research. This study confirms that the various roles of the parents are significantly different in several aspects. Particular attention in future research could be given to the specific role of the father and how important moral discussions with him are for the development of moral responsibility.

There are few ethnic studies related to moral responsibility conducted in the UK. It would be particularly interesting to explore how these cultural differences develop or change with samples of 3<sup>rd</sup> generations.

This research concluded that silent moral arguments take place in all families. A future study could explore in more detail how such lack of sharing influences moral responsibility and whether this lack of sharing continues as participants become adults.

In relation to ethnicity, a religious faith structure and moral growth, there is still much to explore. The key question seems to be how these three variables are connected and whether there are specific areas one can identify to be particularly important for the development of moral responsibility.

Finally, the researcher suggests that there is sufficient evidence to explore a link between relationship with significant others and the purpose of moral responsibility. A future study could examine these two aspects and seek to gain a better understanding of what constitutes and characterises the optimal environment of these two factors.

# Appendix A

# The Six Stages of Moral Judgement<sup>1</sup>

## Level A. Preconventional Level

### **Stage 1. The Stage of Punishment and Obedience**

#### *Content*

Right is literal obedience to rules and authority, avoiding punishment, and not doing physical harm.

1. What is right is to avoid breaking rules, to obey for obedience' sake, and to avoid doing physical damage to people and property.
2. The reasons for doing right are avoidance of punishment and the superior power of authorities.

#### *Social Perspective*

This stage takes an egocentric point of view. A person at this stage doesn't consider the interests of others or recognise they differ from the actor's, and doesn't relate two points of view. Actions are judged in terms of physical consequences rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. Authority's perspective is confused with one's own.

### **Stage 2. The Stage of the Individual Instrumental Purpose and Exchange**

#### *Content*

Right is serving one's own or other's needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange.

1. What is right is following rules when it is to someone's immediate interest. Right is acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same. Right is also what is fair, that is, what is an equal exchange, a deal, an agreement.
2. The reason for doing right is to serve one's own needs or interests in a world where one must recognise that other people have their interests, too.

#### *Social Perspective*

This stage takes a concrete individualistic perspective. A person at this stage separates own interests and points of view from those of authorities and others. He or she is aware everybody has individual interests to pursue and these conflict, so that right is relative (in the concrete individualistic sense). The person integrates or relates conflicting individual interests to others through instrumental exchange of services, through instrumental need for the

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<sup>1</sup> Information on six stages as presented by Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 409 – 412.



other and the other's goodwill, or through fairness, giving each person the same amount.

### **Level B. Conventional Level**

#### **Stage 3. The Stage of Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Conformity**

##### *Content*

The right is playing a good (nice) role, being concerned about other people and their feelings, keeping loyalty and trust with partners, and being motivated to follow rules and expectations.

1. What is right is living up to what is expected by people close to oneself or what people generally expect of people in one's role as son, sister, friend, and so on. "Being good" is important and means having good motives, showing concern about others. It also means keeping mutual relationships, maintaining trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

2. Reasons for doing right are needing to be good in one's own eyes and those of others, caring for others, and because if one puts oneself in the other person's place one would want good behaviour from the self (Golden Rule).

##### *Social Perspective*

This stage takes the perspective of the individual in relationship to other individuals. A person at this stage is aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations, which take primacy over individual interests. The person relates points of view through the "concrete Golden Rule," putting oneself in the other person's shoes. He or she does not consider generalised "system" perspective.

#### **Stage 4. The Stage of Social System and Conscience Maintenance**

##### *Content*

The right is doing one's duty in society, upholding the social order, and maintaining the welfare of society or the group.

1. What is right is fulfilling the actual duties to which one has agreed. Laws are to be upheld, except in extreme cases where they conflict with other fixed social duties and rights. Right is also contributing to society, the group, or the institution.

2. The reasons for doing right are to keep the institution going as a whole, self-respect or conscience as meeting one's defined obligations, or the consequences: "What if everyone did it?"

##### *Social Perspective*

This stage differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. A person at this stage takes the viewpoint of the

system, which defines roles and rules. He or she considers individual relations in terms of place in the system.

### **Level C. Postconventional and Principled Level**

Moral decisions are generated from rights, values, or principles that are (or could be) agreeable to all individuals composing or creating a society designed to have fair and beneficial practices.

#### **Stage 5. The Stage of Prior Rights and Social Contract or Utility**

##### *Content*

The right is upholding the basic rights, values, and legal contracts of a society, even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group.

1. What is right is being aware of the fact that people hold a variety of values and opinions that most values and rules are relative to one's group. These "relative" rules should usually be upheld, however, in the interest of impartiality and because they are the social contract. Some nonrelative values and rights, such as life and liberty, however, must be upheld in any society and regardless of majority opinion.

2. Reasons for doing right are, in general, feeling obligated to obey the law because one has made a social contract to make and abide by laws for the good of all and to protect their own rights and the rights of others. Family, friendship, trust, and work obligations are also commitment or contracts freely entered into, and entail respect for the rights of others. One is concerned that laws and duties be based on rational calculation of overall utility: "the greatest good for the greatest number."

##### *Social Perspective*

This stage takes a prior-to-society perspective – that of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts. The person integrates perspectives by formal mechanisms of agreement, contract, objective impartiality, and due process. He or she considers the moral point of view and the legal point of view, recognises they conflict, and finds it difficult to integrate them.

#### **Stage 6. The Stage of Universal Ethical Principle**

##### *Content*

This stage assumes guidance by universal ethical principles that all humanity should follow.

1. Regarding what is right, Stage 6 is guided by universal ethical principles. Particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles. When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle. Principles are universal principles of justice:

the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals. These are not merely values that are recognised, but are also principles used to generate particular decisions.

2. The reason for doing right is that, as a rational person, one has seen the validity of principles and has become committed to them.

### *Social Perspective*

This stage takes the perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive or on which they are grounded. The perspective is that of any rational individual recognising the nature of morality or the basic moral premise of respect for other persons as an end, not a means.

# Appendix B

### **Heinz and the medicine**

In Europe a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one type of medicine that doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a man in the same town had recently discovered. The medicine was expensive to make, but the man was charging ten times what the medicine cost to make. He paid 800 pounds for the radium and charged 8,000 pounds for a small dose of the medicine. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow money, but could only get together about 4,000 pounds, which was half of what the medicine cost. He told the maker of the drug that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. The man said: "No, I discovered the medicine and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and began to think about breaking into the man's factory to steal the medicine for his wife. Should Heinz steal the medicine?

### **Escaped prisoner**

A man had been sentenced to prison for 10 years. After one year, however, he escaped from prison, moved to a new area of the country, and took a different name, Brown. For eight years he worked hard, and gradually saved enough money to buy his own business. He was fair to his customers, gave his employers top wages, and gave most of his own profits to charity. Then one day, Mrs Jones, an old neighbour, recognised him as the man who escaped from prison eight years before and whom the police was looking for. Should Mrs. Jones report Mr Brown to the police and have him sent back to prison?

### **Webster**

Mr. Webster was the owner and manager of a petrol station. He wanted to hire another mechanic to help him, but good mechanics were hard to find. The only person he found who seemed to be a good mechanic was Mr. Lee, but he was Chinese. While Mr. Webster himself didn't have anything against Orientals, he was afraid to hire Mr. Lee because many of his customers didn't like Orientals. His customers might take their business elsewhere if Mr. Lee was working in the petrol station.

When Mr. Lee asked Mr Webster if he could have the job, Mr Webster said that he had already hired somebody else. But Mr. Webster really had not hired anybody, because he could not find anybody who was a good mechanic besides Mr. Lee. Should Mr Webster have hired Mr. Lee?





## Webster

*Case study 3*

Webster:

- ❑ Should have given the job to Mr. Lee

- ❑ Can't decide

- ☐ Should not have given the job to Mr. Lee

*Very important*

*Somewhat Important*

*Not important*

1

**2**

3

4

5

**1      2      3      4      5**

□ □ □ □ □

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

□ □ □ □ □

□ □ □ □ □

□ □ □ □ □

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

□ □ □ □ □

1) Does the owner of a business have the right to make his own business decisions or not?

2) Whether there is a law that forbids racial discrimination in hiring for jobs.

3) Whether Mr. Webster is prejudiced against Orientals or whether he means nothing personal in refusing the job.

4) Whether hiring a good mechanic or paying the attention to his customers' wishes would be best for his business.

5) What individual differences ought to be relevant in deciding how society's rules are filled?

6) Whether the greedy and competitive capitalistic system ought to be completely abandoned.

7) Do a majority of people in Mr. Webster's society feel like his customers, or are a majority against prejudice?

8) Whether hiring capable men like Mr. Lee would use talents that otherwise be lost to society?

9) Would refusing the job to Mr. Lee be consistent with Mr. Webster's own moral beliefs?

10) Could Mr. Webster be so hard-hearted as to refuse the job, knowing how much it means to Mr. Lee.

11) Whether the religious commandment to love your fellow man applies to this case.

12) If someone's in need, shouldn't he be helped regardless of what you get back from him?

Most important item

Second most important

Third most important

Fourth most important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



























□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □



# Appendix C

## Parental Authority Questionnaire

For each of the following statements circle the number on the 5 – point scale that best indicates how that statement applies to you and your parents. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your parents. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

	1	2	3	4	5	
	●				●	
	Strongly disagree		Disagree			Undecided
				Agree		Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For my parents it is important that the children have their way in the family as often as the parents do.
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If I disagree with one of my parents it is important to them that I am forced to conform to what they thought was right.
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If one of my parents asks me to do something, they expect me to do it immediately without asking any questions.
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In our family, once we have decided a family policy or rule one of my parents will discuss the reasoning behind it with the children.
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My parents always encourage me to express my ideas if I disagree with family restrictions or rules.
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My parents think that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what they as parents want.
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My parents don't allow me to question any decision they have made.
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My parents direct the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is OK for parents to use force in order to get children to behave the way they are supposed to.

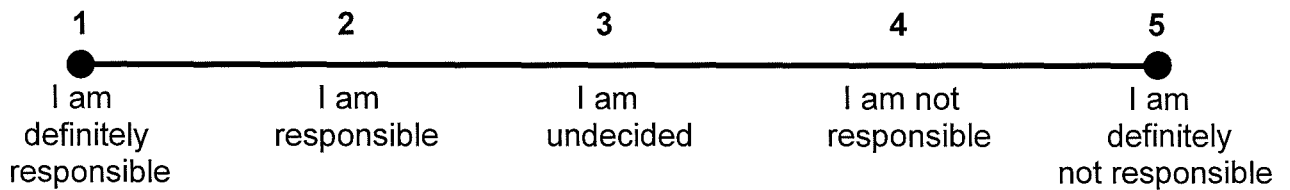
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Institute of Education, London University.



# Appendix D

## Distributive Aspects of Moral Responsibility Test

Imagine that you find yourself in each of the following situations. Indicate on a scale of 1 - 5 what you think your level of responsibility is in each situation. You can colour in the appropriate box on this paper.



1. During an exam you sit next to one of the best students in the class. You happen to see on his paper the answer to a question you don't understand. You decide to copy the information. However, when you copy it you are caught. You are told to leave the room and you have to re-sit the exam after school

1   2   3   4   5  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Whose responsibility is this?**

---

2. Your friend doesn't want to do PE. He asks you to write a fake note for him. You do this but the PE teacher catches you. You get a half an hour detention for faking a note.

1   2   3   4   5  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Are you responsible?**

---

3. You go to the shop to buy some sweets. When you get there you realise that you haven't got enough money to buy what you want. When the shopkeeper doesn't pay much attention you put some of your 'shopping' in your pocket and only pay for the rest. Yet get caught on the CCTV and have to pay a fine.

1   2   3   4   5  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Is this your responsibility?**

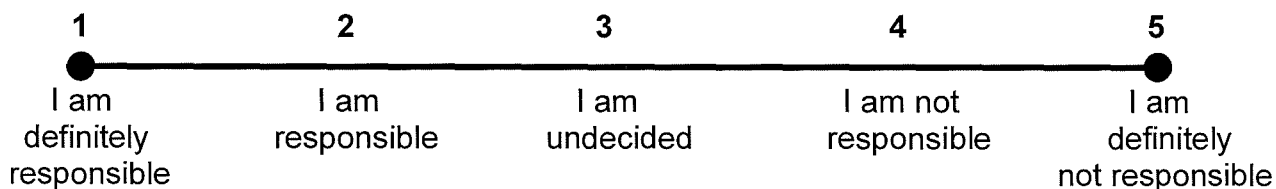
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4. In your year-group is a student who gets bullied a lot. The student gets angry very quickly which many of the bullies think is funny. One day, you and your friends are part of a group that bullies the student. Even though you haven't been actively involved you had a laugh and didn't walk away. The parents of the bullied student complain to the school and you are identified as one of the people who were part of the group. You get a lengthy detention from the Head of Year.

1   2   3   4   5  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Are you responsible?**

---



5. You have a younger sister who spends a lot of time on the computer. You know about the kind of chat rooms that she often goes to because she showed them to you. In the last year or so you have noticed that she is writing some really sad stuff, which definitely goes against your parents' principles and values.

1    2    3    4    5  
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

**Is it your responsibility to tell your parents about it?**

---

6. John is your best friend. Yesterday you noticed that he had a massive bruise on his back. He told you that his dad hits him when he misbehaves. You explained to John that he is not allowed to hurt him in that way. You also told John that he should talk to someone about it. However, John was scared about talking to anybody and made you promise not to talk to anyone either.

A couple of days later you see John with many more bruises on his back and you start to have second thoughts about the promise you made. However, you know that John hasn't changed his mind and doesn't want you to talk about what happens between him and his dad.

1    2    3    4    5  
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

**Are you responsible to tell someone about your concern for John?**

---

7. You and one of your best friends go shopping to get some new clothes. In the shop you try on a few clothes, but you don't find what you are looking for. When you get home you discover that your friend is wearing a piece of clothing from the shop. It was obviously stolen while you were in the shop.

1    2    3    4    5  
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

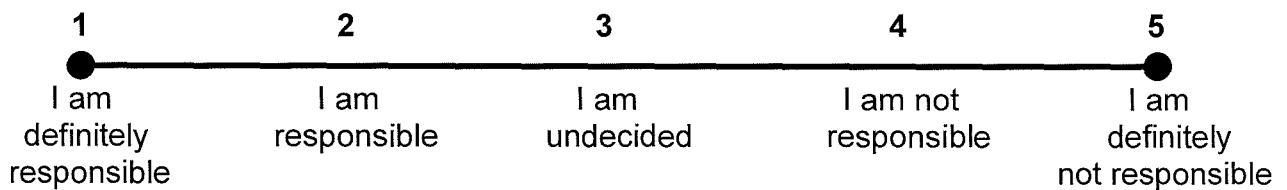
**Do you have the responsibility to tell your friend's parents what happened?**

---

8. You have gone shopping for the afternoon. In a particular shop you buy several items. You pay with a £20 note. When you get the change you are surprised that you have so much money left. Outside the shop you check the receipt and see that you have only paid for two of the three items.

1    2    3    4    5  
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

**Is it your responsibility to go back to pay for the third item?**



9. During lunchtime you and your friends are very keen on playing a game with a ball. Pat, one of your best friends, has brought an expensive leather ball to the school and the teacher always keeps it in a cupboard so that Pat doesn't have to take it home every day.

One day Pat is off but you get the ball from the teacher. During the game Sam punctures the ball. When it is clear what happened Sam tells all the other players that if they say anything to the teacher or Pat he will make sure that they will find themselves in serious trouble. Sam then gives the ball to you to take it back to the teacher.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Are you responsible to tell the teacher or Pat exactly what happened?**

- 
- 10 a) At school you have many friends. For some reason four of your friends continually bully younger students. The teachers at the school have spoken to the bullies and the whole year group on several occasions. They say that all students must help each other to stop the bullying. When seen by the teacher the four friends promise they will stop. However, after a few weeks they start again...

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Would it be your responsibility to remind your friends that they promised to stop bullying?**

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

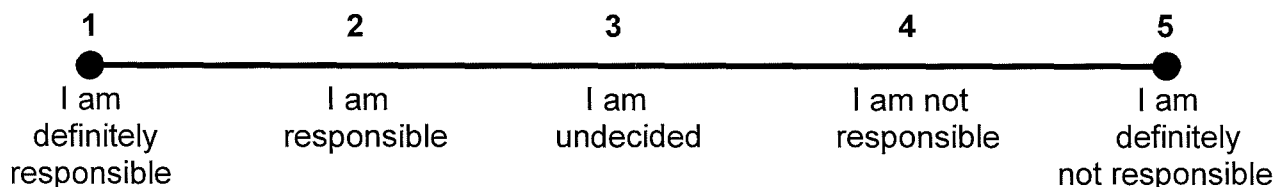
10 b) If you yourself were one of the four 'bully' friends would it be your responsibility to stop without being reminded?

- 
- 10 c) Eventually the four bullies are told to see a school counsellor who talks with them twice a week. During the counselling time it becomes clear that the bullies want to stop but somehow can't. The counsellor considers making a deal with them, that every time they don't bully any child for a week he will buy them a ticket to see a film that weekend.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you were the counsellor do you think you have the responsibility to offer the four boys to buy a cinema ticket to help them stop the bullying?**





11 a) Kim, 13 years old, is invited to a party at the local pub, organised by the brother of Kim's best friend (whose name is Chris). Chris' older brother is known to be a bit of a rough character. For example, on a few occasions he got himself into some trouble with the law. Kim's mother is therefore not particularly keen on the party. However, when the two of them discuss the matter Kim promises not to touch any alcoholic drinks.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you were Kim's mother do you think is it your responsibility as a parent to phone Chris' mother to ask her to make sure Kim does not drink alcohol?**

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11 b) If you were Kim's mother would you see it as your responsibility to offer Kim money to encourage not to touch alcohol?**

---

12 a) Paul is 13 years old and loves football. He gets £10 pocket money every week. To receive this money he needs to do a couple of chores at home.

Paul befriends Fred, one of the caretakers at the football club. They get on well and Paul spends most of his free time at the club helping Fred.

As it turns out Fred is heavily involved in betting. Every Saturday he goes to the bookies and spends a substantial amount of money. It is clear that this aspect of Fred's life has an influence on Paul. He often comes home with stories of how much his friend has made that week. Paul's parents are concerned that he might use some of his money to bet.

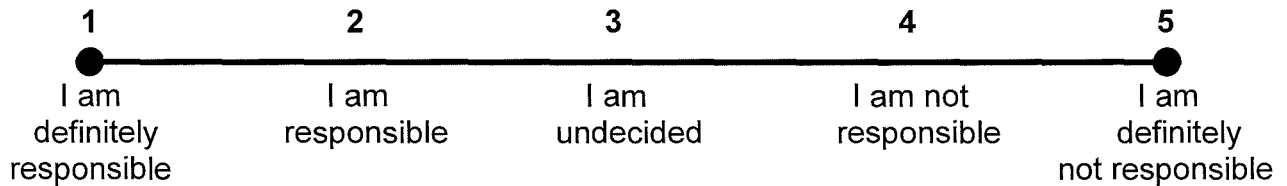
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you were Paul would it be your responsibility to tell your parents how you used you pocket money each week?**

12 b) Later Paul's mother finds a little piece of paper in one of Paul's pockets which proves to her that her son has placed a bet via Fred. She and her husband consider offering to double Paul's pocket money if he stops placing any more bets.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you were Paul's mother or father would it be your responsibility to offer extra money so that Paul stops the betting?**



- 13 Pat (17) and Sam (10) are playing a game with their friends. Half way through the game Pat asks Sam to get a can of drink, sweets, and some chocolate from a shop across the road. Sam agrees. However, when in the shop Sam finds that the money is not enough. When the shopkeeper is not looking Sam steals some of the chocolate. Sam pays for the drinks and more sweets. When Sam is about to leave the shop he is stopped and told that he has been caught for shoplifting.

1    2    3    4    5  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**If you were Pat would you be responsible for Sam's actions?**

---

14. Chris has promised his (her) mother to look after a younger brother (6 years old) one Saturday afternoon. Pat comes to join the two of them and they decide to play a game. During the game the phone rings and it turns out to be Chris' friend. Chris wants to talk to the friend in private and decides to go to another room. For one reason and another the conversation goes on for much longer than planned.

While Chris is still on the phone mother comes home and finds Pat with Chris' younger brother watching a violent video with bad language and sex scenes that Pat had brought from home.

1    2    3    4    5  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**If you were Chris would you consider yourself to be responsible for Pat watching the video with your brother?**

Thank you for answering these questions. Are you:

☐ **male**

☐ **female**

# Appendix E

# Interview Moral Responsibility Test.

Name student:

Year:

Date:

1)

☐<sub>11</sub> Misunderstood the question.

- ☐ 1 It is always wrong to cheat.
- ☐ 2 The end justifies the means.
- ☐ 3 It is worth taking the risk of not getting caught.
- ☐ 4 The student with the answer is responsible.
- ☐ 5 It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure students don't cheat.
- ☐ 6 Other:

☐<sub>12</sub> Undecided

- ☐ 7 I would definitely feel responsible to give information to my sister or brother.
- ☐ 8 I would feel somewhat responsible to give information to my sister or brother.
- ☐ 9 The end justifies the means.
- ☐ 10 It is wrong to give information to anyone.

2)

☐<sub>24</sub> Misunderstood the question.

- ☐ 14 It is always wrong to write fake notes.
- ☐ 15 Both of us should get into trouble.
- ☐ 16 The end justifies the means.
- ☐ 17 It is worth taking the risk of not getting caught.
- ☐ 18 It is completely my friend's responsibility.
- ☐ 19 It is completely the teacher's responsibility.
- ☐ 20 Other:

☐<sub>25</sub> Undecided

- ☐ 21 I would definitely feel responsible to fake a note for my sister or brother.
- ☐ 22 I would feel somewhat responsible to fake a note for my sister or brother.
- ☐ 23 It is wrong to write fake notes for anyone.

3)

☐<sub>32</sub> Misunderstood the question.

- ☐ 27 It is always wrong to steal.
- ☐ 28 The end justifies the means.
- ☐ 29 It is worth taking the risk of not getting caught.
- ☐ 30 I am not responsible but the shopkeeper is.
- ☐ 31 Other:

☐<sub>33</sub> Undecided

<input type="checkbox"/> 41 Undecided	4)	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 Misunderstood the question.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 35 It is always wrong to be part of a bully-group.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 36 I am responsible to say something to my friends.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 37 Laughing doesn't make me really responsible.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 38 I am not responsible because I didn't bully.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 39 Other:

<input type="checkbox"/> 51 Undecided	5)	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 Misunderstood the question.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 43 I am definitely responsible to talk to my parents because she is my sister.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 44 I have the responsibility to talk to my parents only if my sister continues after I warned her.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 45 I have the responsibility to try to get my sister to talk to my parents.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 46 I have the responsibility to warn my sister but it is up to her what she does with my advice.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 47 It is my parents' responsibility to find out for themselves.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 48 I am not responsible for my sister's actions.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 49 Other:

<input type="checkbox"/> 62 Undecided	6)	<input type="checkbox"/> 61 Misunderstood the question.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 53 I am definitely responsible to talk to someone because my friend is in danger even if he doesn't realise it.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 54 I have the responsibility to talk to my friend again and if he doesn't change his mind I'll speak to someone else.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 55 I have the responsibility to ask an adult for advice.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 56 If I speak to someone else I betray my friend's trust.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 57 If I speak to someone else I might make things worse.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 58 It is the responsibility of an adult to find out about this.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 59 This has nothing to do with me.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 60 Other:

<div>7)</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 76 Undecided </div>	<input type="checkbox"/> 75 Misunderstood the question.
	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> 64 I am definitely responsible to talk to my friend's parents because stealing is wrong. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 65 I have the responsibility to talk to my friend and warn her, but if she keeps stealing I need to speak to her parents. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 66 I only have the responsibility to warn my friend. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 67 If I speak to someone else I betray my friend's trust. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 68 It is my friend's life and she needs to learn for herself that this is wrong. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 69 It is the responsibility of an adult (i.e. shop or parents) to find out about this. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 70 This has nothing to do with me. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 71 Other: </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 72 If this was my own sister I definitely have the responsibility to talk to her. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 73 If this was my own sister I definitely have the responsibility to talk to my parents. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 74 I have the responsibility to warn my sister first and then talk to my parents if she doesn't change. </div>

<div>8)</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 84 Undecided </div>	<input type="checkbox"/> 83 Misunderstood the question.
	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> 77 I am responsible to go back because this is a form of stealing and therefore wrong. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 78 I have the responsibility to go back but if it is not too much money I won't bother. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 79 It is the responsibility of the shop to employ better staff. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 80 As a good citizen I'm somehow responsible but I just count myself lucky and will spend the money on something else. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 81 This has nothing to do with me. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 82 Other: </div>

<input type="checkbox"/> 92 Misunderstood the question.	9)	<input type="checkbox"/> 86 I am responsible to say what happened because I took the ball of my friend when he wasn't present.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 87 I have the responsibility to say something only when someone specifically asks me what happened.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 88 Although I feel some responsibility it is better to stay out of trouble.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 89 It is the responsibility of Sam to own up to what he has done. I'll stay quiet.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 90 This has nothing to do with me.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 91 Other:
	<input type="checkbox"/> 93 Undecided	

<input type="checkbox"/> 102 Misunderstood the question.	10a)	<input type="checkbox"/> 95 I am responsible to remind my friend, which is the duty of a good friend.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 96 I have the responsibility to go to the teacher to say that the bullying hasn't stopped.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 97 I have the responsibility to say something only when someone asks me what I know about bullying.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 98 Although I feel some responsibility it is better for me to stay out of trouble and walk away. My friends have to decide for themselves.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 99 It is the responsibility of my friend to stop. I'll stay quiet.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 100 This has nothing to do with me.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 101 Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> 103 Undecided		

<input type="checkbox"/> 109 Misunderstood the question.	10b)	<input type="checkbox"/> 105 I promised to stop so I am responsible to stop.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 106 I have the responsibility to stop when someone reminds me again.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 107 The promise is not important and I can do what I feel I want to that day.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 108 Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Undecided		

<input type="checkbox"/> 118 Undecided	10c)	<input type="checkbox"/> 117 Misunderstood the question.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 112 Yes, this is the responsibility of the counsellor to motivate the bully to stop the bullying.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 113 You don't teach people responsibility in this way (this is a way you treat a little child).
		<input type="checkbox"/> 114 This is like bribing.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 115 It is not the responsibility of the counsellor to do anything, except talk.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 116 Other:

<input type="checkbox"/> 127 Undecided	11a)	<input type="checkbox"/> 126 Misunderstood the question.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 120 As a parent I definitely have the responsibility to phone Chris' mother to ask her to keep an eye on Kim because he is still very impressionable.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 121 I have the responsibility to phone but not tell Kim about it because he will be self-conscious about this.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 122 It is my responsibility to speak to Kim but not phone.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 123 It is the responsibility of Chris' mother to keep an eye on Kim; I don't even have to remind her.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 124 This has nothing to do with me.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 125 Other:	

<input type="checkbox"/> 135 Undecided	11b)	<input type="checkbox"/> 134 Misunderstood the question.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 129 As a parent I definitely have the responsibility to offer money to help Kim understand how important this is.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 130 I have the responsibility to talk to him but not pay money.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 131 It is not my responsibility to pay because this is bribing.
		<input type="checkbox"/> 132 This has nothing to do with me.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 133 Other:	



<div>12a)</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 144 Undecided </div>	<input type="checkbox"/> 143 Misunderstood the question.
	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> 136 It is Paul's responsibility to tell his parents how he uses his pocket money. They gave it to him and they have the right to know what he does with it. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 137 Paul has the responsibility to tell his parents how he uses his pocket money because they think he is spending it on bets. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 138 If Paul's parents specifically ask how he spends his money he has the responsibility to tell them. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 139 He should not have to say anything as long as he does what is legally right. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 140 It is not Paul's responsibility to tell his parents how he used his pocket money because he has earned it. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 141 Under no circumstances does Paul ever have the responsibility to tell what he does with his pocket money. If he does wrong he has to learn. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 142 Other: </div>

<div>12b)</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 153 Undecided </div>	<input type="checkbox"/> 152 Misunderstood the question.
	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> 146 Yes, it is the responsibility of Paul's mother to give him extra money so that he will be motivated to stop betting. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 147 Paul and his mother need to talk together. If they decide that extra money will help Paul to stop betting she should give it to him. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 148 No, it is not the responsibility of Paul's mother to give extra money because that will make him place more bets. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 149 His mother shouldn't give more money but less to teach him a lesson. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 150 This is like bribing and therefore not acceptable. </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> 151 Other: </div>

13)		<input type="checkbox"/> 163 Misunderstood the question.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 155 Yes, it is Pat's responsibility because he gave the money to Sam and that was not enough.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 156 Both Pat and Sam are responsible. Pat should have given more money but Sam could have come back to ask for more.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 157 Sam is responsible; he should have come back to ask for more money.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 158 Neither of them are responsible. <input type="checkbox"/> 159 Other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> 164 Undecided		<input type="checkbox"/> 160 If Sam was my own sister I definitely would be responsible for her actions. <input type="checkbox"/> 161 If Sam was my own sister I have some responsibility for her actions but she should have come back. <input type="checkbox"/> 162 If Sam was my own sister I have no responsibility for her actions.

14)		<input type="checkbox"/> 171 Misunderstood the question.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 166 Yes, I am completely responsible because my mother gave me the job to look after my younger brother.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 167 I have some responsibility because I should have checked, but my friend is also responsible because she should have known better.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 168 It is all my friend's responsibility because she should have known such a film was wrong to show to a young child.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 169 Neither of us are responsible. <input type="checkbox"/> 170 Other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> 172 Undecided		

# Appendix F

## 1. Preamble

- A) “**Thank you** for taking part in this interview.”
- B) “I will guarantee that your comments will be treated as **confidential** throughout this study. Your name will not be mentioned in the study and what you say won’t be passed on to anyone in the school.”
- C) “It would help me if you would **not discuss** the questions of this interview with other students until the end of June. The reason for this is that I would like to interview some other people as well. Prior information might influence or change their own comments.”
- D) “I aim to interview 35 students for this part of the research. Although I will take notes during this interview, there is the possibility I might miss certain points. Therefore, it would help me if I could **tape** this interview so that I can listen to it at a later stage. Is that Ok with you?”
- E) “The **aim** of this interview is to understand your thoughts on moral responsibility and how you think you have learnt these values. I am particularly interested in how people who are important to you have influenced you in this process. Some of the questions in this interview focus on what you think while others ask you to explain feelings or an experience you had in relation to the theme of this study.”
- F) “If there is a question you prefer not to answer you can just tell me. If that happens, I fully **respect** your decision.”
- G) “Any questions before we begin?”
- H) “OK let’s start.”

Interviewer could, if considered appropriate, answer any queries.

## 2. Introduction

### Defining the term 'morality'

- A) "Here are five cards. Could you please write on each card something **you** would say is a moral issue?"

--	--	--	--	--

- B) "Here are some more cards with what different people have called moral issues. Will you put these into **four categories** asking yourself how much they are moral issues to you?"

- 1 = Definitely a moral issue  
 2 = Somewhat a moral issue  
 3 = Not really a moral issue  
 4 = Undecided / no opinion / no comment."

Stealing	Telling Lies	Under age smoking	Swearing	Bullying
Cheating	Breaking a promise	Racism	Sexism	Untidy bedroom
Not giving up your seat in the bus	Failure to wear full uniform at school	Attacking someone with intention to hurt	Talking behind your friend's back	Disrespectful to your grandparents
Wearing provocative clothes	Disrespectful to someone in authority	Under-age sex	Murder	Taking illegal drugs
	Illegal drinking	Vandalism	Getting drunk	

- C) "Does this **summary** of morality sound adequate? Do you have any revisions or additions?"

Probes are encouraged to ask interviewee to explain their thinking.

Timing: It is important that the interviewer does not spend too much time on this section (max. 5 min) and discusses issues more fully during the rest of the interview.

### 3. Introduction

#### Establish order of perceived influence

- A) "As you go through life you **learn** about right and wrong of different people. Using this '**pyramid sheet**', could you tell me who / what you feel shapes your understanding of moral responsibility at this point in life. The top box being most important, second row the boxes are equally important, etc"

1  
2 2  
3 3 3  
4 4 4 4

School	Idols	Family	Media	Friends
Extended family	Religious commitment	Cultural expectations	Me	

- B) "In this research I am especially **interested** in how you have learnt about moral responsibility at home. Particularly how, or if, your parents have helped you in this process. Have I missed anything out if I **describe** the importance of your parents in this regard in the following way: "

Probes are encouraged to ask interviewee to explain their thinking.

Timing: It is important to keep this section brief and not use it as the main discussion.

Question B: Use this as a summary to ensure no main points are left out.

#### 4. Moral discussion

Interviewee generated example

- A) Please think back over the last two to three weeks, will you describe any moral **responsibility discussion** you had with one or both your parents?

Probes:

- What was it about?
- Who were involved?
- How / where did it start?
- Was it expected?
- What was the outcome (solved)?
- Could you describe how you felt at the time?
- Have you discussed this topic before?
- How typical was the discussion?

## 5. Moral conflict discussion

### Understanding moral conflict / parental gender

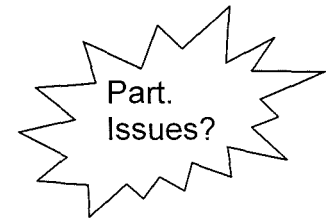
- A) Studies show it is not unusual that moral issues are frequently 'discussed' when parent and child **disagree**. Thinking back over the last two months. Would you say that moral discussions with your parents often turn into some sort of argument / conflict?
- B) Can you think of reasons for this?
- C) How would you describe your **feelings** during such 'discussions'?
- D) Do these feelings **change** over time?
- E) Can you explain this?

Throughout, the interviewer probes to clarify responses and reasons.



5. Moral conflict discussion  
Understanding moral conflict / parental gender  
(continued)

- F) Can you **predict** when a moral conflict discussion is about to take place?
- G) How?
- H) Does it make a **difference** if you discuss moral issues with your mum or dad (stepparents)?
- I) In what way is there a difference?



Throughout, the interviewer probes to clarify responses and reasons.

- H) Interviewer needs to be aware at this point that if stepparents (boyfriend / girlfriend) are involved they might have a notable influence.
- I) Listen for (or probe) interviewee's preference to discuss certain moral issues with a particular parent.

## 6. Moral conflict discussion

### Parental style

- A) We have already talked about how your parents discuss moral issues with you. Please, look at this card. On it you see three **types of parents**. It is obviously difficult to make generalisations but which of the three is most like your parent(s)?

1

2

3

- B) In what way do you think your parents are different?
- C) Please explain why you have chosen the one you have?

Probe according to Power's research:

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| - Focusing            | - Support            |
| - Challenging         | - Affective Conflict |
| - Sharing perspective | - Rejecting          |
| - Rejecting           |                      |

## 7. Moral conflict discussion Culture

- A) Each family has its own '**family culture**'. It determines how certain things are done at home. What are, according to you, the aspects of your family culture?
- B) How do these influence the way your parents talk with you about moral issues?
- C) Say you stay with or **visit a friend**. Which of the aspects you have talked about are particularly different from your friend's family?
- D) If a moral conflict takes place, how **public** is it allowed to be?
- E) What are the reasons for this?

Although not exclusively, this section is particularly exploring unique understanding of Asian interviewees. It is important that the interviewer probes to determine how the interviewee perceives these differences to affect their understanding of moral reasoning.

Generation		
1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>

## 7. Moral conflict discussion

### Culture (continued)

(For Asian interviewees only)

- F) In what way does your family here in England differ from a (your) family you know in the country where, for example, your **grandparents** lived?
- G) Note actual contact with Asian culture.
- H) Do these differences affect the way you think about moral responsibility?
- I) Can you give me details how this is the case?

Interviewer probes for cultural understanding.

## 8. Moral conflict discussion

### Religious significance

- A) Many people allow their understanding of moral responsibility to be shaped by **religious convictions**. Would you say that your reasoning about moral responsibility is related to the teaching of a particular religion or not?
- B) If yes, which religion?
- C) Can you give examples how your religious conviction influences your understanding of moral responsibility?
- D) Are religious **values / expectations** communicated during moral 'discussions' at home?
- E) How? What is said?

Probe for level of religious commitment in relation to moral conviction  
Community centred or obligation to Deity.

## 9. Moral conflict discussion

### Silent 'discussion'

- A) Are there certain aspects about moral responsibility you will try to **avoid** discussing with your parents?
- B) Can you explain this?
- C) Going back to the cards about moral issues, which are issues you never discuss with your parents?
- D) Can you explain this (culture?)?
- E) If yes, how did you formulate your understanding on the issues?

Interviewer probes to clarify responses and reasons  
D) Explore if culture sees certain aspects of moral behaviour as unacceptable for parent / child discussion. Does gender play a role as well (link 5. H)?

## 10. Future family

- A) **Imagine** you are 40 years old. You are happily married and have two or three children. Thinking about the way parents teach their children about moral responsibility, will your approach be different from your family's today?
- B) Can you describe how?
- C) How would you **help / teach** your children moral responsibility?

Interviewer probes to explore ideas about future family life

# Appendix G



Family Interaction Session:  
Transcribing rules  
Numbering rules  
Sectioning rules

Moral Judgment Interview

Transaction Guidelines

Abbreviations: I = Interviewer I -2 = Second interviewer  
A = Adolescent (when applicable)  
M = Mother  
F = Father

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Heading: Type of heading in the left hand corner of each page.

First line: Page number  
Second line: Type of interview  
Third line: Code number

Margins and spacing: There should be at least a one-inch margin on each side of the page. Double space between speakers.

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Non-verbal sounds: Any expressions, sounds of motion, tone of voice, etc. should be described by the transcriber in brackets (or parentheses).  
For example, (laugh), (angry), (yelling), (gasp).

Laugh: When a person laughs during his/her own speech, simply note "laugh" in parentheses. When another person laughs during someone's speech, or when two people laugh, note in parentheses who is laughing.  
For example, A: ..... (laughs) ..... (meaning that A laughs)  
A: ..... (M laughs ) .....  
A: ..... ( A and F laugh ) .....

Pause: Indicate pauses within a speech or between speeches, and note the approximate length of pause, in number of seconds.  
For example, (pause – 5)

Questions: Indicate all questions – as judged by tone of voice or content – with question mark.

Unclear: When a word cannot be understood, type "unclear" in parentheses, and note the approximate number of words which were unclear, and then note at what number on the "counter" it occurred.

For example,           A: I really can't see going all (unclear – 3; 657) but maybe you can.

Guesses:                       When making a good guess at an unclear word or phrase, use a question mark within parentheses to show the uncertainty.

For example:           A: He said I could go (to the shore?) tomorrow.

Interviewers:                Indicate when the Interviewer enters and leaves the room.

For example:           INTVIEWER ENTERS

### Methods for showing interactions

1.     Insertion: An insertion is a one- or two- word utterance during another's speech, which doesn't break up that other speech. Any time a person says one or two words while another is speaking ("within" another's speech), it is an insertion and is typed in slashes within the speech. It doesn't matter what the one or two words are, as long as they do not break the other person's speech:

For example,           A: I really think it was wrong to do /M: Yah/ and I will never do...

                          A: I don't know why it's going to /M: I do/ be better.

                          A: I think this is really stupid to be /M: yes, but/ sitting here.

If, however, the 1 or 2 words cause the other person to stop speaking, it is an interruption (see "interruption," #2 below). If the 1 or 2 words are said during a pause, when no one else is speaking, then it is a regular speech.

2.     Interruption: When one person starts talking while another is talking indicate with a parentheses where the interruption occurred. This is only used when there has been an actual overlap of sounds (also see "immediate Response," #4 below).

For example:           A: Do you want to go to the next question or do

                          M:   (I think we are done)

3.     Simultaneous speech: When person "M" starts talking while person "A" is talking, and the first speaker "A" keeps on talking, then continue to type the first person's speech on the same line to the end of the line. Type the second person's speech underneath, beginning with a parentheses at the point where that second speech broke in.

When both speeches are on one line or shorter, the format is simple:

For example:           A: I mean I just want to go to the end of the line with this one.

                          M:   (I wish we didn't have to

3.1    Longer Simultaneous Speech – Use of Plus –signs: When longer simultaneous speeches occur, one person's speech may be "split up" on the page by the other person's speech. In this case, plus-signs (+) are used at the end of the first line and at the beginning of the subsequent line, to show that those two lines are continuous speech, though they are spaced several lines apart on the page.

For example:           A: Why not start the next question now, I feel that we are all +

                          M:   (I have more to say first.

A: +through with this one.

3.2 Longer Simultaneous Speech – continued: When the second simultaneous speech is also longer than one line, use the following format:

For example: A: When she goes to sit down after dinner, I think she's trying to+

M: (You know I never sit down after dinner, I am always doing dishes.

A: +get away from us and get rid of our problems, and that's what I don't like.

3.3 Starting Simultaneously: When two people start speaking at exactly the same time, type parentheses in front of whichever speech is second on the page.

For example: A: We'll never know how the story turns out and whether she lives.

M: (I really would like to know who made up these stories., Wouldn't you like to know?

4. Immediate Response: When a speaker enters rapidly upon the completion of the previous speech, but does not actually overlap, do not use the interruption format. Start the second speech back at the left margin. Type an equal-sign (=) in front of it to show that it has followed immediately (rapidly) after the last word of the previous speech.

For example: A: I think he should be good at doing

M: =Everything about him is always good, isn't that right?

Finally: When three people are talking at once, or when there are complex overlapping speeches, try to apply the basic rules:

- In cases of overlapping, the parenthesis goes directly below the word at which the interruption was made.

For example: A: XXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXX XX XX XXX

B: (XXXXXX XXX XXX XXX XXXX XXX XXXX XXXX

- Use plus-signs when one continuous speech has to be "split up" on the page (by a simultaneous speech in between).

For example: A: XXXX XX XXX XXX XXX XXXX XXX XXXX XXXX XX+

M: ( XXXX XXX XX XX XX XXXXX XX.

A: +XXX XXX XXX XXXX XX XX XXXXX.

If necessary, make a note in the margin to explain the situation – only as a last resort, of course!

### Numbering rules.

1. Number each speech consecutively. A speech is defined as everything a person says before they are completely interrupted by another or they stop speaking on their own and someone else begins to talk.
2. When you encounter simultaneous speech or insertions, number as follows:

-Insertions are short words or sentences that do not stop the flow of another speaker's speech. Insertions are "embedded" in another's speech.

For example:

- (1) F: I think that he should ....
- (2) M: I agree.  
F: ... steal the drug because if he didn't ...
- (3) M: Mmmmmm.  
F: ... his wife would die.
- (4) A: I think he shouldn't.

Here, the mother's (M) speeches are insertions in the father's (F) speech. Number these in order. Put the number directly above or below the insertion in the text.

-Simultaneous speeches are essentially long insertions. They are sentences, etc. which do not completely stop the previous speaker's speech. Number simultaneous speeches the same way you number insertions. In addition, be sure to give the previous speaker's speech only ONE number; if the speech is typed in several parts, label with the speech number and a LETTER for each part of the speech.

For example:

- (1a) M: Yeah, see, what I ended ... I was sort of straggling it at first because I kept saying, you know, I hate to see him steal it if there were any other alternatives, like I ...
- (2) A: Right, that's what I was saying.
- (1b) M: ... kept saying, like, you know, couldn't he get somebody to put pressure on the guy, because he was obviously ...
- (3) A: That's what ...
- (1c) M: ... ripping of the price ...
- (3a) A: ... that's what I said.
- (1d) M: ... of the medicine and make him take less money.
- (4) F: I assumed that.

3. Keep numbering consecutively from section to section within one transcript.
4. Number only those speeches that are contained within a section.
5. Do not number laughs.

6. Do number listening responses and "unclears".
7. Do not number interviewer speeches if they are contained within a section. They should be only in a section as one of the two speeches preceding the adolescent's first position of speech.

#### Sectioning Rules.

1. Find the first adolescent position speech in the discussion. A position speech of an adolescent is any speech which is a stance, idea, opinion, attitude, or stated feeling, and which is not a fragment, unintelligible, or a paralinguistic indicator of a position of affect. Mark this speech with one star.
2. Include two speeches that directly precede the adolescent position speech. These speeches may include the interviewer's or a previous adolescent's speech. Make sure all parts of the speaker's speech are included (a, b, c, etc.). This may mean including several parts of a simultaneous speech.
3. Also include all parental speeches that immediately follow the adolescent speech until the adolescent makes a second position speech.
4. End the section with this second adolescent speech. Mark the speech with two stars.
5. The following do not qualify as an adolescent's second position speech:
  - simple grunts
  - paralinguistic signs
  - simultaneous speech which is a listening response, simple agreement, or simple disagreement.
6. The second adolescent position speech may be:
  - a fragment
  - a simultaneous speech
  - any "successful interruption"

An interruption is "successful" when it is clear that the speaker following the interruption has responded to it. To determine if a statement is an interruption or a simultaneous speech, you cannot always rely on the transcriber. If the speaker relies on what the "interrupter" has said, then it was a successful interruption and the speaker is starting a new speech which should be given a new number when the speech continues.

7. When you determine the boundaries of a section, type it onto a "unit sheet" and photocopy it. Be sure to fill in all of the labels of each sheet. Be sure to

write out the actual discussion question the interviewer has given. For example, write "should Heinz steal the drug?" instead of simply putting down "Heinz".

8. When you type the section sheet, be sure to number each speech according to the numbering rules. Do number listening responses. Do not number laughs.

#### General Instructions for Coders.

The DECS was developed for coding family discussions. The codes and categories of the DECS are operationalizations of behaviours which structural-developmental theory suggest stimulates or hinders social-cognitive development. Though the DECS was developed specifically to code parent and adolescent discussions of moral dilemmas, the DECS could be used to code the verbal behaviour of any number of individuals. The individuals need not necessarily form a family group and the discussion task would not have to be discussed of a moral dilemma. The DECS has been used with transcripts of taped family discussion sessions. It may also be possible to code discussion behaviours directly from an audiotape using the DECS.

The theoretical basis for the codes and organisation of the DECS is described in Chapter III of this thesis.<sup>1</sup> The method of sectioning a transcript (optional) and the rules for numbering each speech in the transcript and transcribing audiotapes are included in Appendix A. The DECS is an expansion and revision of Berkowitz and Gibbs' manual for coding transactive dialogues. Specific codes and examples of discussion behaviour which are adapted or taken directly from Berkowitz and Gibbs' manual are noted in the DECS manual with an asterisk.

A coder must be able to code components of every speech in a transcript. These components are:

- 1) The functional definition
- 2) The speaker
- 3) To whom a speech was spoken
- 4) The content of the speech

The first component is the functional definition of a speech. Each speech must receive at least one code for functional definition. More than one functional definition code may be given to a single speech but in these cases each code must refer to separate parts of the speech. For example, a speech may consist of several sentences. One sentence may be a request (functional definition code #14) and another code may be a statement of non-competitive humour (functional definition code #21). Two codes cannot be given to the same set of words within a single speech. The same functional definition code cannot be given twice to the same speech.

There are twenty-five functional definition codes in the DECS. The manual explains the meaning of each of these codes and gives examples of correctly coded

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<sup>1</sup> Powers, 1988

discussion behaviours. For purposes of analysis, codes are grouped into eight conceptual categories. The names of these larger categories designate a common quality of all the codes within that category. For example, the codes of encouragement (#20) and non-competitive humour (#21) are grouped into the category of support because both encouragement and non-competitive humour are assumed to be supportive of a family member's participation in the discussion. It is important to note the category to which each code belongs. The category name may help a coder check the appropriateness of his or her coding decision.

In addition to being grouped into categories, each code is by definition given a rating for mode and level of transactiveness. The coder does not need to decide the mode of each speech or the level of transactiveness of each speech since these variables are contained within the functional definition code. A coder should, however, refer to the designated mode and level of transactiveness of each functional definition code when deciding if that code fits a particular speech. Definitions of the mode and level of transactiveness are presented in Chapter III of the thesis.<sup>2</sup> Functional definition codes and categories are shown on pages 263-320 in this manual.

The second component of each speech that a coder will score is the content of the speech. A code for content must accompany each code for functional definition. For example, if you give two functional definition codes to a speech (a request code and a non-competitive humour code) you must give two content codes for that speech. One of the content codes will designate the content of the request and the other content code will designate the content of the non-competitive humour. There are three content codes: reasoning, task, and process. These codes are defined on pages 261-262 of this manual.

The third and fourth component of each speech that you will code are the identity of the speaker and to whom the speech was spoken. Rules for coding these variables are on pages 259-260 of this manual.

When you code any of these four components it is very important to pay attention to the context of the speech. That is, you should consider the flow of the discussion up to the point of the speech you are trying to code. It is helpful to read the entire transcript through once before you begin to code. If it has been decided that a transcript will be divided into sections, only speeches within sections obtain codes. In this case you should still have a copy of the entire transcript with you when you code. You may need to refer to the full transcript to determine the function or content of a speech (especially those speeches which begin a section).

All proper names have been removed in the examples of discussion behaviour used in this manual. The initials M., F., A., and I. are used to represent mother, father, adolescent and interviewer, respectively. Specific codes and examples which are adapted or taken directly from Berkowitz and Gibbs' manual are noted with an asterisk.

#### Speaker Codes.

The speaker codes designate the identity of the speaker for each speech. A speaker code must accompany each functional definition code given to a speech. If two functional definition codes are given to a speech then two speaker codes must

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<sup>2</sup> Powers, 1988

be given for that speech, even though the speaker codes will be identical for that speech.

For the present study there are only four speaker codes possible: mother, father, adolescent, and interviewer.

#### To Whom Codes.

The to whom codes indicate one of two things: either to whom the speech was spoken, or to whom the speech referred. If the speech refers to (or is about) a family member who is in the room, but is not the family member to whom the speech was spoken, code only to whom the speech refers. If the speech is not about a present family member, code to whom the speech was spoken. Consider the following examples:

1. F: M., I think A is not acting his age.  
This speech is spoken by the father to the mother, but the speech is about the adolescent, therefore, the to whom code would be adolescent.
2. M: A., Why don't you explain your answer first?  
This speech is spoken to the adolescent and is not about a family member, so code as adolescent.

Again, a to whom code must accompany each functional definition code even if more than one functional definition code is given to the speech. For example, if a speech receives a functional definition code of encouragement (#20) and a code for intent for closure (#3) that speech would also receive two to whom codes. A to whom code would correspond to each functional definition code even if the to whom codes are not different. For example:

1. M: A., You have discussed this issue thoughtfully today. Would you call the interviewer in now?  
The first sentence in this speech was given a functional definition code of encouragement (#20) and a to whom code of adolescent.  
  
The second sentence in this speech was given a functional definition code of intent for disclosure (#3) and a to whom code of adolescent.

There are five possible to whom codes in the present study: mother, father, adolescent, total family, and interviewer. The code for total family indicates cases where the speaker is speaking to or about the entire family rather than an individual member.

If you are coding from a typed transcript and not from video-tape, you must determine to whom a speech is spoken from the context of the discussion. We have found that this is usually not difficult to do in a reliable manner. If you are unable to tell to whom a speech is directed this must be indicated as unclear.



### Content Codes.

Each position of a speech which receives a functional definition code must also receive a corresponding content code. Content codes are of three types: reasoning, task and process. Definitions of each of the content areas are as follows:

1. Reasoning: This code is given if the speech or portion of speech pertains to discussing how to solve the moral dilemma. This includes any statement of opinion or any competitive statement concerning the best solution to the moral dilemma, as well as questions pertaining to solving the dilemma. Because of the nature of the task which was presented to families in the present study, we have found most statements have reasoning content.

For example:

- A: I think Heinz is stupid to steal the drug.
- M: What do you think, dear?
- F: Do you understand my point?

2. Task: A statement is coded as having task content if the statement discusses, defines, clarifies or questions the nature of what the family is supposed to do in the family research session. In addition, any statement which clarifies or questions what the facts of the original dilemma are should be coded as a task content.

For example:

- F: To resolve it? You mean we are supported to agree? We are supposed to have a consensus?
- M: Did she say that this drug would cure the wife or not?
- A: This is so stupid. It is silly to discuss this old woman.

3. Process: A statement is given a code for process content if it pertains to the behaviour or personality of an individual or the group.

For example:

- M: A. is only saying that because she is still immature.
- A: You can't just stop the discussion because you don't like my answer, daddy. We're not at home.
- F: We sure know how to argue, don't we?

If the content of a statement cannot be determined because the statement is unclear or too short (such as an interrupted statement) then code the content of that statement the same as the content code of the preceding statement.

## Functional Definition Codes and Categories.

### 1. Paraphrase<sup>3</sup>

There are four kinds of paraphrase. Learn each of these sub-codes even though you will be coding all of them as paraphrase (#1). A paraphrase focuses the discussion by highlighting a discussant's viewpoint or reasoning. Paraphrases must be non-competitive. Paraphrases are transactive because they represent the view of another person. To code for a paraphrase, there should be evidence that the positions that are being paraphrased were previously expressed by another family member. These original position statements do not have to immediately precede the paraphrase. If the paraphrase is clearly inaccurate, code the statement as a distortion (#19).

Type 1: Juxtaposition. In this paraphrase the speaker states his or her own position and another discussant's position or two discussants' positions without any attempt at integrating, defending, or evaluating them.

Formal example:

Your position is X and my position is Y.

Research example:

1. F: A. says Heinz should not steal and we say he should.
2. M: You think he should get put away and F. feels as though he should have probation.
3. F: Well, A. has been saying all along her opinion is different than ours. I have tried to point out that it may be the same.
4. F: You have a humanistic view and I have more or less a Spartan view.
5. M: Okay, so you are saying that you can see that there are bad laws but don't think they should be changed by people breaking them, but you think that they should try and change them in alternate ways. I still feel that if there's a bad law I think a lot of times by people breaking it all at one time, it will help to change it. I think you should do everything you can to change a bad law.

Distinctions:

A: Do not confuse this type of paraphrase with a clarification (type 2: integration). A type 2 clarification does not simply state two positions, but elucidates the common ground of the two positions. Consider the following example of clarification (type 2: integration).

1. F: But, don't you see that for the good of society Heinz should not steal? Heinz stealing will begin to break down the structure of society.
2. A: I see that we both believe that the maintenance of society comes first, but I think that by stealing the drug, Heinz is helping society since he will be making public the way a crook druggist took advantage.

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<sup>3</sup> Paraphrase is a combination of and adaptation of three of Berkowitz and Gibbs' codes (paraphrase, juxtaposition, and dyad paraphrase) and an additional original sub-code (triadic agreement or disagreement).

B: Don't confuse this type of paraphrase with a competitive comparison of two positions which serves to defend the speaker's point. This kind of statement would be coded as a competitive clarification (#4).

Type 2: Direct Representation (this corresponds to Berkowitz and Gibbs' code for paraphrase). In this type of paraphrase the speaker simply restates another's viewpoint in new words. This restatement may also be in the form of a question about whether this paraphrase is correct.

Formal examples:

1. I can accurately restate your position or reasoning
2. Is my statement accurate?

Research examples:

1. F: So you think it could be wrong, huh?
2. A: If they say we have perfectly known operation for appendicitis and it's perfectly known and it's obvious that the person is meant to live. But she wasn't meant to live if he went around asking all his friends and they didn't have money for him and he couldn't do the newspapers and he couldn't do this and he couldn't do that....  
F: Oh, it's like predestined.
3. F: You just think that life is just not important. It is what it is and if you're prolonging it, it's not important.
4. A: Yeah, I felt because they married and he has been living with her most of her life and he's ... they've been living together for quite a bit of time, and he cares about her and everything and she's in a bad shape ... She might not even be able to make, you know, reasonable...  
M: You mean she might not be in her right mind?  
A: Right.
5. A: I think, I think he should probably try to get some money, I don't think he should steal it. If there's, if he does get caught, he's bound to get caught and he won't get to keep it anyway, but I don't think he should steal it.  
F: You think he should try for some more money, right?
6. A: All right, question number one. Should Heinz steal the drug? Why or why not? I am wrong, I said no he shouldn't steal the drug. Although if I was Heinz, I might steal the drug.  
M: Well, I say he would steal the drug. Why did you say that if you were in his position you might consider it right to steal the drug?  
A: No, I didn't say.  
M: Oh, you said (unclear), okay, okay, sorry. Okay.  
A: It would be wrong.  
M: You might steal the drug but it would be wrong either way?  
A: Yeah
7. A: I put yes, I would say that he shouldn't steal the drug because it's not really a definite decision whether it would cure her and it's still ...

And (unclear) just things like I always thought of obey the law. So I guess I would say that he shouldn't steal the drug.

F: Shouldn't he steal the drug because it's wrong to steal and because it wasn't 100% [sure], right?

A: Uh-huh.

8. A: Well, I would say my belief is that since you (unclear) life is something that you can't create that given that you're not endangering more people by whatever you do to save one person, you know, that you should go ahead and save that person.

M: People can't be replaced.

A: Right, there's no value, you can't set a value to a human life, you know what I mean.

9. A: She may deserve to live, so he may, he might still do it, but I think whether he would do it or not, he should because a life is at stake.

F: Because, like you said, still it's a human life involved.

10. A: We control the laws so that the laws will control others.

M: We should control the laws so that they might help us organise society.

11. A: Everyone was breaking the law.

M: Right.

A: I mean how could it work out that way if what you say is true, I mean what you said is that there will always be people who try to break the law and if we make it, if we let them break the law they'll abuse it. But that's not what happened. If we make laws and stop people from doing things then they abuse it. I think that's why so many people smoke marijuana of the laws against it.

M: Because it's a rebellion against.

A: Yeah, right.

12. A: Okay, so then I guess I'd say that even though it's against the law, if Heinz did choose to steal, I wouldn't, you know what I mean, if I was sitting on a jury, I couldn't convict him.

F: Well you would be lenient.

A: Right.

13. A: You know, say to the person, look buddy, if you don't change, you know, we're going to lock you up. You say, well now, I know that your environment and so and so and such and such, and well, now, I understand but you're not doing anything to cause them to change.

M: Right.

A: And unless you convince them that it's wrong then the people forget, you're not going to change.

M: You're saying, you're saying, oh, it's too bad you killed Mrs. Smith over there but your dad was a wife beater, so ...

A: Right. So that makes it all right.

14. A: How does this relate to Heinz's case? Well, like we said before I don't think Heinz should know that the law, that it's not right to steal but yeah, he did it in consideration of another person.

F: He didn't do it for himself.

Distinctions:

1. The question form of this code must include a paraphrase of another's reasoning. If it doesn't, it is a request (#14). If a challenge is embedded in the request it is a competitive request (#6). Consider the following examples:
  - A: What do you think? (request)
  - F: Do you really think it is wrong for a doctor to prolong life? (competitive request)
  - A: You think Heinz should steal the drug, right? (paraphrase)

Type 3: Dyad/Triad representation (This is an adaptation of Berkowitz and Gibbs' code for dyad paraphrase). In this type of paraphrase the speaker is restating a position shared by two or three discussants.

Formal example:

1. I can accurately restate a position that two or more of us share.

Research examples:

1. A: I think the one thing we agree on is that if he's asked he will answer honestly. I think we also agree that there is no answer that fits all circumstances.
2. F: We've all agreed that there have to be consequences. He cannot expect to have broken the law and not pay consequences.
3. M: All right, so we agree that he has to pay.
4. A: Oh, M. and I both felt that the fact that a promise and an agreement had been made was the most important thing in the ...
5. M: Yes, I agree with you. I tend to agree with you and eh, I agree with you that if more people, eh, object to the wrong laws of society, that would change the society. In fact, now I see that eh, these people will be sacrificing themselves to promote to better the society and I kind of agree with you.
6. A: Yeah, we agreed that whether or not he loves his wife has nothing to do with why he should or shouldn't steal the drug.
7. F: Okay, thinking in terms of society, why should people who break the law be punished? I think we both agreed that it's wrong to break the laws because we both have to [have] restraints in society. It's one form ... it's got to be taken into consideration why you wrote the law. In Heinz's case, it was to save a life, whereas he wasn't stealing a car for joyriding or to ...
8. A: Right.

Distinction:

1. Do not confuse with a clarification (type 2: integration, #13).
2. Do not confuse with a simple agreement (#15) where agreement is stated without a paraphrase of the position which is agreed upon.

Type 4: Triadic Agreement or disagreement. In this type of paraphrase the speaker simply states that the entire group agrees or disagrees on a particular point.

Formal example:

1. All three of us agree or disagree.

Research examples:

1. A: But obviously you have your opinion, she has her opinion, but I have my opinion, we all bounce back and forth. You, yours is all the way to one side. Mine's all the way to the other side. We're not ...
2. M: Well, that's not perfect agreement, but that's as far as we can go as a family.
3. F: That's as far, that's as much as we can agree on.
4. A: I don't think we are very far apart.

Distinctions:

1. Distinguish from a simple agreement (#15) or simple disagreement (#11). Triadic agreement or disagreement (#1) must be a statement of agreement among all family members. Simple agreement and simple disagreement are in the categories of sharing perspectives and challenging respectively. Triadic agreement or disagreement is in the category of focusing because a statement of agreement or disagreement between all family members usually serves to focus the discussion toward a conclusion.

Triadic agreement or disagreement is different from dyad / triad representation because triadic agreement or disagreement does not restate the position of all members. It only states the status of family consensus. Both of these kinds of statements are coded as paraphrase (#1), however.

Focus  
Non-competitive  
Transactive

#### Comprehension check.<sup>4</sup>

There are no sub-codes of comprehension check. Code comprehension check is when the speaker asks another discussant to verify if he or she understands the speaker's position. Comprehension check is non-competitive and is transactive because the statement serves to further another person's understanding.

Formal example:

1. Do you understand what I am saying?

Research example:

1. A: Can you see, I mean, if we're supposed to come to some consensus, you can see the point we're trying to make?
2. M: Have you guys understood what I am saying?

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<sup>4</sup> This code corresponds to Berkowitz and Gibbs' code of feedback request.

3. F: Now, A., have you understood what your mother and I have been saying?

Distinctions:

1. Don't confuse with a request (#14). A request is any non-competitive question other than a comprehension check, paraphrase, or intent for disclosure.
2. Some discussants repeatedly end sentences with "Right?" or "you know?". These are simply styles of speaking and should not be coded as comprehension check.

Focus  
Non-competitive  
Non-transactive

Intent for closure.

There are no sub-codes of intent for disclosure. The speaker is trying to conclude the discussion after all discussants have stated their views and a decision to agree or disagree has been made.

The coder must judge that closure is "appropriate." To judge if closure is appropriate, check;

- (1) If there is agreement on how to solve the dilemma; is the agreement sincere?
- (2) If there are acknowledged irreconcilable differences; has there been a "reasonable" effort to understand each other?
- (3) A "reasonable effort" for resolving differences must include positions being clearly stated, explained, clarified, and understood by all.

Intent for closure is non-competitive and is not transactive because the statement does not represent another's reasoning or coordinate two points of view.

The speaker may suggest that the family end the discussion either because family members have reached a consensus decision or the family has irresolvable differences. The reasons for closure may not be explicit but should be clear from the context. This can be a question which asks for closure or the speaker may request closure by asking a family member to get the interviewer to come back into the room or by getting the interviewer by him or herself.

Formal examples:

1. (We have reached consensus and) we can stop the discussion.
2. (We cannot agree, but) we should end the discussion.
3. Can we stop now?

Research examples:

1. A: Go get the interviewer.
2. M: Ms I! (calling interviewer)
3. F: A., go tell her we're done.
4. A: We're finished!

5. M: Do you want me to call her?
6. F: I think we have discussed this enough.

Distinctions:

1. Don't confuse with a speaker's refusal to finish the task or to go further before the discussion is completed (refusal to do request or task, #17).
2. Distinguish from a simple statement that everyone agrees or disagrees (paraphrase, #1). There must be a reference to ending the discussion.

Challenge  
Competitive  
Transactive

### Competitive Clarification.<sup>5</sup>

The speaker explains or elaborates his or her own position in an effort to provide clarity for others about how the position is defensive. The speech is competitive because it is defending the speaker's position, not simply explaining the position. A competitive clarification is transactive because the speaker must take other perspectives into consideration in order to present an effective defence. The speaker's statement must not be his or her first position statement in the discussion unless it is explicitly a response to another family member's competitive statement.

Formal examples:

1. My position is not necessarily what you take it to be.
2. I can qualify my position to defend against your critique.

Research examples:

1. M: But a lot would depend on what he knows about the situation.  
I don't think there's an absolute "should."  
A: I don't think there is either.  
F: There certainly isn't. Uh, it depends on the ...  
A: Then why are you making one?  
F: No, I'm saying it depends on the circumstances.
2. M and F have just finished establishing their shared position. A has stated his counter opinion and is trying to clarify it.  
A: All right. Uh, he wouldn't have the money if he ... if the promise hadn't been made to him. So, having the money was the most important part at that point. Because he wouldn't have the money, he wouldn't have bothered to go out and earn and save the money for camp if the father ... if the promise hadn't been made in the first place.

<sup>5</sup> This code is a combination of Berkowitz and Gibbs' competitive clarification and refinement / competitive elaboration codes.



3. A: All right! If , if, if they say ... If they say we have a perfectly known operation for appendicitis and it's perfectly known and it's obvious that the person is meant to live, but he wasn't meant to live if he went around asking all his friends and they didn't have money for him, and he couldn't do the newspapers, and he couldn't do this, and he couldn't do that.
4. A: That they should turn themselves into robots.  
M: No, that they would say, "Well, there's going to be situations where I'm going to have to do things against my wishes just because I'm representing the law. And if I think those things are going to screw me up, I'd better not become a police officer. If I don't think those things will faze me and I want to dedicate myself to the law, I'll become a police officer."
5. A: No. no. wait , wait, wait. How do you conclude that if Heinz steals the drug, that's going to lead us into chaos? I mean, what kind of generalisation is that?  
F: 'Cause ...  
A: That's the worst generalisation I've ever heard in my ... that's like saying ...  
F: I didn't say it's going to lead to chaos.  
A: If  
F: If everyone took that view.
6. A: You've got to look at what the implications are going to be from his actions.  
M: And what are they going to be? I say they won't be nothing. The only implication is ...  
A: Okay, okay, you're going to say that Heinz is the only guy in society that is willing to break the law to do what he feels is right? No one else is going to do that?  
M: That's not the case. I ... if, the laws are wrong, then people should break them. I mean, if the laws are wrong, I don't care. I mean, if that leads us into some kind of chaos, that's fine.
7. A: But how do you justify being in a situation where you say, "Hey, this is wrong?" What gives you the power to say that? It's just an emotional thing.  
F: It's not emotion. It has to do with logic, judgements. We have to make decisions based on information.
8. A: What you say, though is, given the assumption ... that whole argument works if you're given the assumption that people can't think very well. If you think that people can rarely think and almost all of us are real assholes, then that will work. Then the ending of it will be chaos and no one will care if people hurt each other or kill each other, rob and loot. That will work out that way, if you think that people are close to assholes.  
M: Yeah man, they're close to assholes.  
A: I mean, do you, if the ...  
F: I don't mean close to assholes, I just mean that what they're doing is because of what they feel and not everyone else feels

that way, so everyone is doing a different thing 'cause they feel different.

9. A: I don't understand. You say it would be wrong, but I don't, I can't see how it would be wrong. Just because it would be against the law doesn't necessarily mean that it's wrong.

M: It's wrong in the realms of society. Of how society is set up, by laws, that's the wrong part. It's right that he should save his loved one. All right. But the way society is set up, you know, you're breaking the law so that's wrong. Whether the wrong is a right, you know, or the law is right, it's to you or not, it's wrong to break the law, 'cause that's the way society is set up.

10. F: Sure there is, man. Even if the law says that it's wrong, that doesn't even matter. I mean. That's irrelevant. I mean, laws can be wrong. You have to separate, you have to separate laws from right and wrong. I mean, certainly some laws are wrong.

A: But the object of laws is right and wrong.

F: The object of laws is to help us control society. That doesn't mean that any law we make is right. It could be that we make wrong laws.

11. A: Yeah, I would say that that's probably the way most police officers think. I think it's wrong, but I don't think people should be automatons. I don't think people should be robots. Just because they're police, that means, "well, everyone says we've got to enforce the law because I'm a police officer."

M: But they want to do that.

A: Well, that's right.

M: It's their choice.

12. A: So, if they want to be assholes, they can be assholes, too, but, that's not the point. The point is that they should think. They can't just be robots. I mean, that's no way, that's certainly not even, not even human existence.

F: Well I think that should all have been taken into consideration when they decided to become police officers.

13. A: Even if that person killed your wife?

F: Even if a person killed your wife, that would just be a case of revenge.

A: If you kill the person?

F: That's right. But that doesn't mean that somehow we have to use primitive or medieval justice.

A: Don't you think stealing is kind of primitive? You can't get anything ...

F: That's right, murder is primitive too. But that doesn't mean that somehow something is going to be made right by killing that person.

A: Or by stealing?

F: I don't know. In this case, something would be made right.

A: But, see, there's a discrepancy. In some cases, it's right, in some cases it's wrong.

F: That's right. That's why I say that people have got to be taught to make good decisions. If you can make good decisions, then you can distinguish between types of cases where breaking the law is right and types of cases where breaking the law is wrong.

#### Distinctions:

The speaker must be defending his or her position. If he or she is simply explaining a position in a non-competitive manner, code the speech as a clarification (#13).

Challenge  
Competitive  
Transactive

#### Critique.<sup>6</sup>

The speaker tries to negate another family member's position by criticising their reasoning. Critiques are competitive because they point out the weakness of another's reasoning. Critiques are transactive because the speaker understands another's viewpoint and critiques that view from the standpoint of his or her own reasoning.

#### Formal examples:

1. Your reasoning misses an important distinction, or involves a superfluous distinction.
2. Your position implicitly involves an assumption that is questionable.
3. Your reasoning does not necessarily lead to your conclusion / opinion, or your opinion has not been sufficiently justified.
4. Your reasoning applies equally well to the opposite opinion.
5. There is a logical inconsistency in your reasoning.
6. Your reasoning can be extended to the following extreme, with which none of us would agree.
7. Here is a paraphrase of your reasoning that highlights its weakness.

#### Research examples:

1. A: Who is he to say who lives and dies?  
F: Nobody's to say who lives and who dies. It's, aw, he is trying to help his wife not die. You don't just, aw ... if you just take that thing, then there is no use of having doctors and medicine or anything if you're using that as a factor.
2. F: And I thought that the cop should look the other way because, ah, this man was really ...

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<sup>6</sup> This code is a combination of Berkowitz and Gibbs' codes for reasoning critique, contradiction, and competitive paraphrase.

- A: But then, it's not the cop's decision to decide. It's not the cop's decision, it's the judge's decision. Then, if they make you to court, then the judge can decide, make a landmark decision or something. But, I mean, the cop isn't the one who's supposed to figure out which rules are right, he's supposed to enforce them.
3. A: ... as for her husband having anything to do with it, I don't think he should have anything to do with the decision [to allow euthanasia for his wife] because he's not the one suffering. He doesn't know.  
F: No, but he can ... He's been witnessing the suffering.
4. A: [This is a personal face-to-face thing, and you know I think in that situation that it hurt the old man [to be cheated] probably more than it hurt the store [to be stolen from].  
M: But still, you're talking of people, like there's got to be a store owner.
5. A: Yeah, like I think the reason I said "no" there, was because I kind of put myself in that position. If I wouldn't want to go, I wouldn't want someone to ...  
F: You wouldn't want to go but then you know you have to. You have to sort of look at it realistically.
6. A: Here again, we put ourselves as the judge, to judge about the morals of the person who has the drug, if he is right or wrong. We and (unclear) ... either wrong or right, he would feel guilty after stealing the drug, still.  
M: Do you mean that it's always wrong to break the law?  
A: It's not the law I'm looking at. It's the act itself of stealing.  
M: But, don't you think the druggist is stealing by charging ... I think when people charge too high prices that that is stealing. That's taking money out of your pockets just as much as if someone hits you on the head.
7. A: What about the guy who's making the profit of the illness? She's probably going to die and they think, the doctors think that the drug might save her. So he's one ... There's two moral wrongs. The druggist is profiteering ...  
F: Right.  
A: On the illness of other people and he's not just making, you know, he's not just making out of it. He's, he's charging, what, ten times what is costs.  
F: But just because he's morally wrong, it doesn't make it morally right for the other guy to go and steal it.
8. M: So. I still think that the druggist is too greedy.  
A: Yeah, the druggist is but I think that Heinz, you know [should] find some way to reach an agreement with the druggist.  
M: Well, you know that assumes that the druggist is a reasonable man.
9. F: Steal the drug, because, again, there's a human life, a human life at stake, you know.  
A: Okay. But okay, although it's a human life at stake, if he goes and steals the drug, they're going to know that he stole it. Okay, if he gets caught he's the one that has to do the time, and the other person, he don't know this other person but still he is suffering for something he did

for this other person. And a stranger, you don't know, they probably, you know, he probably won't say nothing of it after he done saved his life, but eh,

F: Yeah, but still, it may even be worthwhile for Heinz. Just the fact, you know, that something you did helped save another person. I mean, it might be like a feeling that, you know, that a doctor might get when he saves a life that, you know, you know,

10. A: There's no, no togetherness in the whole thing. It's just total chaos, so that's why people should avoid breaking the law. You got to have some sort of breaking the law. You got to have some sort of standard, and that standard cannot be right for everyone. But it's got to just do the best it can. What else can you do?

M: What you say, though, is given the assumption ... That whole argument works if you're given the assumption that people can't think very well. If you think that people can barely think and almost all of us are real assholes, then that will work. Then the ending of it will be chaos and no one will care if people hurt and each other or kill each other, and rob and loot. That will work out that way, if you think that people are close to assholes.

A: Yeah man, they're close to assholes.

11. A: Yes, life is more important than, but life is, not as important as moral values.

F: Yeah.

A: I could ...

F: But saving life instead of money can also be a moral value.

12. A: Now, wait a minute. Okay, it's wrong because he's breaking the law. That's the only wrong there is in it. And since I'm not Heinz, it's wrong to break the law, so, so, I say he shouldn't steal it.

M: I don't understand. You say it would be wrong, but I don't, I can't see how it would be wrong. Just because it would be against the law doesn't necessary mean it's wrong.

13. A: But here, I don't think that people should do everything they can to avoid breaking the law. I can't see why. I mean, I think people should do everything they can to make sure that the things they do are right. That doesn't mean that they should try to avoid breaking the law.

M: But you see, if you don't have your decision on whether you're doing something right according to the law, then you're just basing that decision on what you feel. And every person feels different, so every person is going to be basing their decision on what they feel, which is different people who are saying, "Well, this is right because it is," and then we've got someone saying, "Well that's wrong because of this." And nobody is going to be on the same level. So you've just got complete chaos, 'cause no one can say, "Well, look, right here it says, right there." So everyone ...

A: Well, that ...

M: There's no, no togetherness in the whole thing. It's just total chaos. So that's why people should avoid breaking the law. You cannot be right for everyone. But it's got to just do the best it can.

14. A: Sure, there is, man. Even if the law says that it's wrong, that doesn't even matter. I mean, that's irrelevant. I mean, laws can be wrong. You have to separate, you have to separate laws from right and wrong. I mean, certainly some laws are wrong.  
F: But the object of laws is right a wrong.
15. A: I mean, isn't it really the case that if the law is wrong, it should be broken just because it's wrong? I mean, who the hell made the laws? We did. The laws didn't make us, we made the laws. I mean, do they run our lives? Do they control us or should we control them?  
M: The laws?  
A: Yeah. Should the laws control us?  
M: We control the laws so that the laws will control others.  
A: We should control the laws so that they might help us organise society.  
M: But, you know you can't please everyone. You can't say that, "Okay, it's wrong to steal but if your wife," you know ... Write a little amendment into the law, "If your wife is dying from cancer it's cool to steal." You can't.  
A: Okay, you see, I don't think ...  
M: The law can't be right for everyone all the time, so there's the wrong in it. The thing is this is a situation ... Like, there are many other situations where just to say that it's right to steal just doesn't work. I mean. It's just the way it is.
16. A: Only some laws, you know, you probably can get away with but some, like Heinz 's case ... Okay when they take to court and stuff, the judge don't think the same as we think, you know.  
F: But, I don't know ,in this case, you know, like there's no saying that just because a law is made that it's always right. You know, like in this case, eh, I don't think it's wrong at all for Heinz to break the law just because the law is not large enough that is covers every circumstance. You know, a law is just something kind of general, and it's kind of a general guidance for what you can or can't do, or what you, is, what you legally can and can't do. In some cases the law, eh, doesn't like, pertain to certain situations. The law is something general that in a lot of times doesn't pertain to specific situations.
17. A: But ... it would still seem that ... for a humanitarian's sake, he should steal the drug.  
F: Okay, but then you said that no he shouldn't steal it for a stranger, and now you're saying "humanitarian."
18. A: I think people should do everything they can to save another's life, anyhow, because we identify with the other person, with the other life. We put ourselves in place of that life which should be saved and we would like someone else to try for us.  
M: But how, but eh, the dilemma ... In the first question you didn't feel that someone should do everything they could do to save someone's life though. Because if you had said that then Heinz shouldn't have stolen that drug, I mean, if you had said that you should do everything you can, then you would have said that Heinz could go ahead and steal the drug.

19. F: Yeah. Should Officer Brown report Heinz for stealing? Why or why not?  
 A: I said he should not. But my reasons were, my reasons were that, eh, he, is a policeman, as a policeman, he is not on duty all the time.  
 F: From what you said before though it would. Heinz would be morally wrong for breaking the law and as a policeman in order to protect society it would be his duty to report that.
20. A: In this situation Joe did not create the problem. The father created the problem.  
 F: But the father is still father and in that relationship.  
 A: But you cannot solve all problems because father is father.
21. F: It is fair by commandments. You see the son and father are not just two strangers.  
 A: I understand that.  
 F: They are son and father.  
 M: Not like two boys or like two friends.  
 A: They are two people first, then they are father and son.

#### Distinctions:

1. Do not confuse with a competitive opinion / giving information statement (#9). A competitive opinion / giving information statement is a statement that poses a challenging opinion or gives challenging facts but is not a transactive critique of another position.
2. If the critique is overtly hostile and is used to devalue the other person, code as hostility (#23).
3. Do not confuse with a counter-consideration (#7). In a counter-consideration the speaker presents a different example of the dilemma which illustrates the weakness of another discussant's reasoning.

Challenge  
 Competitive  
 Transactive

#### Competitive request.

The speaker challenges another discussant's opinions through a direct question. Competitive request is transactive because the function of the request is to provoke the other discussant to discover a weakness in his or her reasoning.

Formal example:

1. What good is your opinion in the light of this question?

Research examples:

1. F: The guy was a druggist ... the point is that you missed the facts of the story the way they presented them. One is that the guy, the druggist, had a cure for the cancer.

- A: So what good is saving her life if he's gonna be put in jail anyway?
2. F: No, this is not a victimless crime. This is a situation where the life of a woman is at stake. He could prolong the life of the wife he loved by doing that.
- A: Who is he to say who lives and dies?
3. A: It's wrong in the realms of society, of how society is set up, by laws. That's the wrong part. It's right that he should save his loved one. All right, but the way society is set up, you know, you're breaking the law, so that's wrong. Whether the wrong is a right, you know, or the law is right, it's to you or not, it's wrong. When you look at the whole thing, it's wrong to break the law, 'cause that's the way society is set up.
- M: So, what kind of implications does that, I mean, if you think that that's the case then what about laws that say certain people can't vote? Do you think, I mean, what should they do? Should those people vote? I mean what should they do? Should they break the law? I mean, what should they do when the laws are wrong, when the laws say that white people can't vote? Then what do you do?
4. A: A woman has the right to make the final decision [about euthanasia for herself]. She can do it herself. I honestly don't think the doctor should ... well, I don't know ... (pause) I mean, I'll agree. I'll say yes to [question] number two that the woman has the right to make the final decision but, uh, [question] number one [i.e., should the doctor perform the mercy killing?] ...
- M: But if you say yes on [question] two, doesn't it kind of follow that ... the doctor could ... actually give the drug that would make ... which would kill her?
5. F: Do you think the great majority of people would rape women if there were no laws against it?
- A: No, not the great majority.
- F: Then, how do you conclude that, after what you just said, how can you conclude that if there were no laws that it would lead to chaos?
6. F: You've got an appendicitis, eh, if you ... say you've got an appendicitis and your side was hurting like hell. Do you want to ... do you think it's wrong for the doctor to prolong your life?
7. A: But if we leave it to society, to the individual to judge when he can steal and when he considers it right and wrong, there will be no law abiding. The structure of the society will fall down. There will be no security because I can see that I, my reasons are good for stealing. That changes the whole point of view.
- M: But what about society that allows someone that doesn't take human life into consideration, that allows someone to charge so much money for a drug that could save someone's life?
8. A: That's not the case. I, if, if the laws are wrong, then people should break them. I mean, if the laws are wrong the laws are wrong, I don't care. I mean, if that leads us into some kind of chaos, that's fine.
- F: But how do you justify your own, being in a situation where you say, "Hey, this law is wrong"? What gives you the power to say that?



## Distinctions:

Distinguish this code from a non-competitive request (#14). The function of a competitive request is to challenge another's opinion or reasoning.

Challenge  
Competitive  
Transactive

## 7. Counter-consideration<sup>7</sup>

The speaker presents a different example of the dilemma that he or she feels another discussant cannot incorporate into their reasoning. The counter-consideration is transactive because it is given in order to highlight the weakness in another's position.

### Formal example:

1. Here is a different dilemma which cannot be solved by your line of reasoning.

### Research examples:

1. A: If you have a sickness, it's not going to kill you then you take some medicine that will make you feel better while you're living. But if you're going to die, then you might as well. Who's he to say she was supposed to live?  
F: Well, let's put it in the situation. It's hard to believe that you really mean if you were about to die and they could prolong your life five or ten years, that's that's ... aw, that's ... you wouldn't look at it the same way.
2. F: Well, I look at it this way – I wish he had made the, eh, presentation that instead of his wife, eh, that it was his fifteen-year-old child and see if you would, eh, suppose it was ... suppose it was a ... they changed the, eh, the circumstances and, eh, that the fifteen-year-old child was just about to have a wonderful date, but the man knew she was going to die ...
3. A: No, that they should say, "there's going to be situations where I'm going to have to do things against my wishes just because I'm representing the law. And if I think those things are going to screw me up, I'd better not become a police officer. If I don't think those things will faze me and I want to dedicate myself to the law, I'll become a police officer," and ...  
M: Well, how about this situation? What if someone becomes a police officer and the law, a law is adopted that says that I don't know, anything that's going to hurt the officer. Say, say, that the, say it's in Nazi Germany. Say the law says that we're going to exterminate Jews, and this police officer happens to be a Jew, and the law also says that all Jews must register.

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<sup>7</sup> This code is a combination and revision of Berkowitz and Gibbs' codes for counter-consideration and competitive extension.

Challenge  
Competitive  
Transactive

## 8. Concession.

The speaker changes his or her position as a concession to another discussant's critique. Concession is in the category of challenge and is in the competitive mode because it is the outcome of a competitive, challenging interchange. It is transactive because a concession takes account of another's reasoning.

Formal example:

1. I must refine my position or point as a concession to your position or point.

Research examples:

1. A: But then it's not the cop's decision to decide. It's not the cop's decision, it's the judge's decision. The, if they take you to court, then the judge can decide, make a landmark decision or something. But, I mean, the cop isn't the one who's supposed to figure out which rules are right, he's supposed to enforce them and if you don't want cops around, you're just trying to scare people? They won't scare many people if they're just standing there.  
F: I'd go far along enough to say that I wouldn't say the cop was wrong.
2. A: They said "might" – they didn't say it would cure – they said "might cure" ...  
F: Why don't ... why don't you check that and see if it was "might" or "would."  
A: Why do you have to check? It just, just, even if it did, d-d ....  
F: All right, let's accept it even if it, eh, even if it probably ...

Distinction:

Distinguish from a simple agreement (#15). A concession must be a change or reversal of a previously stated position. A concession is usually in response to a challenging statement.

Challenge  
Competitive  
Non-transactive

## 9. Competitive opinion statement / giving information.

The speaker gives his or her own opinion or presents new information that does not support another's position. The competitive opinion statement / giving

information code is not transactive because it is simply stating a different view or fact, not engaging the other's reasoning by a direct critique or representation of another's reasoning.

Formal example:

1. Here is my opinion or some new information which does not support your opinion.

Research examples:

1. A: She's going to die anyway.  
M: No, she wasn't going to die if she got the drug.
2. F: I wouldn't  
A: I would. And I would do it for the dog.
3. A: Dad, let me finish. Well, I wouldn't give up my life for someone else.

Distinctions:

1. Distinguish from a non-competitive opinion / giving information statement (#12) which is not a statement opposing another's reasoning.
2. Do not confuse with critique (#5) or competitive clarification (#4). The major distinction between these codes and the #9 is that both #5 and #4 are transactive and #9 is non-transactive. Though #9 is competitive, this statement does not actively use the other's reasoning to make a critique or clarify the speaker's position.

Challenge  
Competitive  
Non-transactive

## 9. Request for change.

The speaker either requests or tells the group or an individual to change the way they are interacting or change their opinion. The speaker may also state that others should change their behaviour or opinion. This request must be explicit, not implied through the critique of another's reasoning.

Formal example:

1. Would you change your behaviour or opinion?
2. I think you should change your behaviour or opinion.
3. Do something for me.

Research examples:

1. A: They said "might" – they didn't say it would cure – they said "might cure ..."  
F: Why don't you check that and see if it was "might" or "would."
2. M: Why don't you just say, "Yes, he should steal," and agree with me??
3. M: Now, look, stop being grouchy.
4. A: It is a routine operation, see?

F: That's right, that's right! Just let me finish this.

Distinctions:

Do not confuse the last example with resist/ threaten (#22). Code request for change when a speaker asks another for the change to continue speaking. "Let me finish" is an example of request for change. Resist / threaten is coded when a speaker asks or tells another not to talk. For example, "Shut up," or "Will you be quiet?" In request for change the emphasis is on the speaker having the chance to complete his or her statement. In resist / threaten the emphasis is on stopping another person from speaking.

Challenge  
Competitive  
Non-transactive

11. Simple disagreement.

The speaker states only that he or she disagrees with the statement of other speakers. This must be a clear direct verbal statement.

Formal example:

1. No. I disagree.

Research examples:

1. A: She's going to die anyways.  
F: No, she wasn't.
2. F: I'm just amazed that there are ... I think that you're just putting me on in terms of ...  
A: I'm not!
3. M: You would steal for an animal? No. I'm sorry.

Distinctions:

Distinguish from paraphrases, type 4: triadic agreement or disagreement (#1). Simple disagreement is a statement of disagreement between only two persons. Triadic agreement or disagreement states disagreement among the whole group.

Sharing perspectives  
Non-competitive  
Non-transactive

12. Opinion statement / giving information.

The speaker gives a straightforward statement of opinion or contributes some information. This statement is not competitive or devaluing. The non-competitive

aspect of the speech may have to be determined from the context of the prior discussion.

Formal examples:

1. Here is a simple statement of my opinion or some information.

Research examples:

1. F: It is always morally ... I don't even get the question. I'll have to get the interviewer.  
M: All I was thinking of was, there are some laws that you can't follow, that could be on both sides of the fence, you know, and society puts these laws down. But, most of the times, you should follow the rules. Most of the times, you should follow the law, it's morally correct to do so.  
(mother's first statement of her position)
2. A: Would you pay \$2,000 to save Alex?  
M: I wouldn't.
3. M: I saw the dilemma as between which is more important, human life or a law?
4. A: I don't like the druggist.
5. You see, I think the druggist's position is completely immoral.
6. F: Maybe he may know, so if he's got the thing on tape.  
M: It could be maybe, according to Heinz's case.

Sharing perspective  
Non-competitive  
Transactive

### 13. Clarification.<sup>8</sup>

There are two types of clarification. Each is an attempt to further explain one's own position in a non-competitive manner. Code both sub types as #13. Clarification is transactive because it is an attempt to present one's own view in a manner that will make sense to another person who thinks differently. Clarification must not be in response to another person's competitive speech. In that case, code as #4 (competitive clarification).

Type 1: Explain / Justify.

In this type of clarification the speaker attempts or justifies his or her opinion or behaviour. Type 1 clarification may also be a statement explaining the psychological reasons for why a person thinks as he does.

Formal examples:

1. I can explain my position or the task further to aid your understanding.

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<sup>8</sup> This code is a combination of Berkowitz and Gibbs' clarification and integration codes with a new addition of justification by referring to one's own psychological process or personality.

2. I can clarify my position or the task with this reasoning.
3. This is the psychological process I went through to arrive at my answer.
4. I said what I said because of who I am.

Research examples:

1. F: So, you would think it would be wrong, huh?  
A: I mean, I don't think it's wrong – the stealing part – I just ... it's the prolonging the life business.
2. A: Oh, right. I would steal for Uncle F\_\_\_\_. It's just such a different thing that I'm a kid, though, because I could get away with it.  
M: You would take the risk of it?  
A: I have such a different point of view, because I'm a kid.
3. A: I don't know what you mean.  
F: Eh, my main idea is that stealing is wrong, morally wrong. Now, sometimes the society ... my answer is more with moral values than it is with society. This has more value for me.
4. A: Do you mean that it's always wrong to break the law?  
F: It's not the law I am looking at. It's the act itself of stealing.
5. A: Well, I say he should steal the drug. Why did you say that if you were in his position you might consider it right to steal the drug.  
M: No, I didn't say [it would be right to steal]  
A: Oh you said (unclear), okay, okay, sorry, okay.  
M: It would be wrong.

Type 2: Integration.

The speaker coordinates two positions so that the resultant position that integrates the two previous positions of the speaker may note an assumption which is common to both positions. The style may be interrogative where the speaker is checking for the other discussant's agreement.

Formal examples:

1. We can combine our positions into a common view.
2. Here's a general premise common to both of our positions.

Research examples:

1. A: Well, I think in this particular case, this individual should steal.  
F: But, don't you see that H. stealing will begin to break down the structure of society. That ... that for the good of society H. should not steal.  
A: I see that we both believe that the maintenance of society comes first, but I think that stealing the drug, H. is helping society since he will be making public the way a crook druggist took advantage.
2. M: The doctor can see how the woman is suffering ... he is wise enough, I believe, to make that kind of decision.  
A: Well, but I don't agree with that for the simple reason that a doctor should not kill her. She should be able to die naturally whether or ... if not naturally, if she wants to kill herself, fine, but I don't believe the doctor should be the one to do it.

M: Then what happens if the woman wants ... what happens if the woman decides that she wants to die and she tells her doctor that?

A: Eh, a women has the right to make the final decision. She can do it herself ... I honestly don't think the doctor should ...

M: Well, in your argument and mine, the end result is the same – the woman dies.

Distinctions:

1. Do not confuse with cases where the speaker is merely stating two separate positions (paraphrase, type 1: juxtaposition, #1) or and already shared position (paraphrase, type 3: dyad / triad paraphrase, 1) rather than coordinating two different positions and pointing out the similarities
2. Do not confuse with cases where the speaker is merely stating agreement between two or more persons (simple agreement, #15, and paraphrase, type 4: triadic agreement or disagreement, #1).
3. Do not confuse with competitive of the two positions (critique, #5)

Sharing perspective  
Non-competitive  
Transactive

#### 14. Request.<sup>9</sup>

The speaker asks another family member for their opinion or to clarify their opinion or behaviour in a non-competitive manner. Statements which strongly imply a request should also be scored as requests: e.g., "I don't understand what you are getting at." Though request does not fit a strict definition of transactive, it is called transactive (following Berkowitz and Gibbs' manual) because it aids the sharing of different perspectives.

Formal examples:

1. Why do you say (or do) that?
2. Do you agree with what I think?
3. What is your opinion?
4. Explain what you mean.

Research examples:

1. A: They said "might" – they didn't say that it would cure – they said "might cure ..."  
F: Why would it make any difference?
2. M: I disagree with you there, but how do they know for sure that the particular drug is going to cure the woman?
3. M: I thought Heinz should steal the drug. Isn't that what you said, too?
4. A: All right, why?

<sup>9</sup> This code includes Berkowitz and Gibbs' justification request code. In addition, the DECS includes opinion request and clarification request in this code.

- M: Why do you feel ...
5. But from being the simple, not simple, just a person on the street and in the community, I'd say no, Heinz shouldn't steal the drug.  
F: Well, I say he should steal the drug. Why did you say that if you were in his position you might consider it right to steal the drug?
  6. M: Well, why is it wrong for him to steal the drug?
  7. A: Okay, number one. Should Heinz steal the drug?  
M: I said yes.  
A: I said no.  
M: How come?

Distinctions:

1. Do not confuse with an explicit request for change in a position or behaviour (#10). A request (#14) is a request for clarification.
2. Do not confuse with the interrogative form of paraphrase, type 2: direct representation, (#1), which only asks if the speaker's paraphrase is accurate.
3. Do not confuse with competitive request (#6) which is an effort to challenge another's reasoning.
4. Do not confuse with the interrogative form of intent for closure (#3) which only asks if the discussion may end.

Avoidance  
Conflictual  
Non-transactive

16. Distracting.

The distracting code is used to show that a speech is "off the subject." The speaker diffuses attention from the current topic. Distracting takes precedence over coding with any other code. Distracting statements can also have other functional definitions (such as request, opinion statement, etc.) but should be coded as distracting if they are off the subject. Distracting behaviours are not transactive and are thought to be evidence of the conflictual mode.

Formal example:

1. Any statement that is not related to the present conversation or task.

Research examples:

(The following statements came in the middle of a discussion about Heinz).

1. M: So I owe you money for Saturday night?  
A: No, I owe you money and I'll get it when we get home.  
F: Let's keep to the subject.  
M: Okay, all right, this, yeah ...  
A: You do owe me money. So I'll give only him ... so I'll give him part ..  
M: For taking Peter to the movies?



17. Refusal to do request or task.

The speaker refuses to do a requested act or the research task. The speaker tries to remove only himself or herself from the request or discussion and does not suggest refusal for all discussion members. A refusal of a request or task must be stated: simply ignoring a request is not evidence to code.

Formal example:

1. I quit.
2. I won't answer.
3. I won't do this task or what you ask.

Research examples:

1. M: Why don't you go and get the lady?  
A: No, I did it last time!
2. F: That's what we're here for.  
A: I don't care, I don't want to, we developed it enough. We all agree on it, we all agree it should be open and everything.
3. F: Any normal policeman does what?  
A: Nothing. Discussion closed.
4. M: Well, what did you think Heinz should do?  
A: I don't know.  
M: Didn't you say he shouldn't steal the drug?  
A: I don't know.  
M: Why did you say he shouldn't steal the drug?  
A: I don't know.

(In the last example the adolescent's statements are an attempt to get out of sharing his views rather than a sincere statement that he does not know what he said).

Distinctions:

1. Do not confuse with an appropriate intent for closure (#3). In intent for closure the speaker is trying to end discussions within the framework of the task after differences have been clearly discussed, not refusing to do the task.
2. Distinguish from devalue / quit task (#18). In devalue / quit task, type 2: premature intent for closure, the speaker tries to get all discussion members to end a discussion before a "reasonable effort" has been made to come to a consensus. A refusal to do a request or task may occur at any time in the discussion and does not suggest refusal for all members of the discussion.

## 18. Devalue / quit task.

There are two types of devalue / quit task. Both types are coded as #18.

### Type 1: Undermining task.

This type of devalue / quit task is coded when the speaker states that the task is not worthwhile.

Formal example:

1. This task is not worth my time..

Research example:

1. A: This is dumb. Don't you think this is dumb?

This undermining statement may be in interrogative form if the speaker is checking for agreement.

### Type 2: Premature intent for disclosure.

The speaker tries to conclude the entire family discussion before a "reasonable effort" has been made to come to a consensus. The speaker may do this by requesting closure, requesting or restating an insincere or distorted consensus, or by stating irresolvable, but relatively unexplored disagreement as a reason for closure. The speaker may also suggest that he or she doesn't have time to discuss.

To judge if a reasonable effort has been made to share resolve different opinion, check if all positions have been clearly stated, explained, clarified, and understood by all discussants.

Formal examples:

1. We have reached consensus and can stop the discussion.
2. Can we stop now?
3. We cannot agree but should end the discussion.
4. Hurry up, I have something else to do.

Research examples:

1. F: So you're ready to give up now. I don't think we may even continue the discussion on that basis ... that it's not important to live.
2. A: I have to write an English paper, so we'd better think quick.

### Distinctions:

1. Don't confuse with intent for closure (#3) that it is not premature. Notice especially that the formal examples are often the same. The only way to distinguish the two coded is to make a judgement as to whether the intent for closure follows a reasonable effort to reach consensus or is an attempt to avoid the discussion.

2. Don't confuse with the speaker's flat refusal to finish the task or to go further (#17). Premature intent for closure is an attempt to take everyone away from the task.
3. Distinguish from a simple statement that everyone agrees or disagrees without asking for closure (#1).

Distortion  
 Conflictual  
 Non-transactive

#### 19. Distortion.

This code included any statements that are inaccurate representations of another speaker's statements or inaccurate representations of the task.

Research examples:

1. F: Another way of looking at it – you didn't have any money. Would you rob a bank?  
 A: No, it's not a life and death situation.  
 F: Well, if you need the money because you're going to starve to death?  
 A: I wouldn't rob a bank, I'd rob a restaurant.  
 F: I don't know A., I thought you had a little better ...  
 A: If I were starving to death, I'd rob the restaurant.  
 M: I can't believe you'd steal if you just wanted a bite to eat.
2. M: He can only get \$1,000.  
 F: You see, he's in a real dilemma.  
 A: He can borrow the other \$1,000. from a friend.  
 (The original dilemma explicitly denies this possibility)

Distinction:

Do not confuse with statement in which the speaker correctly understands another person, but is exaggerating the position to illustrate a point (#5).

Support  
 Non-competitive  
 Non-transactive

#### 20. Encouragement

There are three types of encouragement. Each type indicates support for another family member. Encouragement is non-transactive because the speaker does not actively coordinate two perspectives.

Type 1: Praise.

The speaker compliments another person or the group on their performance or personality.

Formal example:

1. You are a praise-worthy person.
2. Your reasoning or behaviour is good.

Research example:

1. M: You're doing great, kid!
2. F: You're working very hard with these ideas.
3. A: Don't let me get very headstrong; keep on telling me how terrific I am and I might start to believe it (laughs).  
M: Well, you are!

Type 2: Statement of understanding. The speaker gives a simple statement that he or she understands the other.

Formal example:

1. I understand you.

Research example:

1. M: We've got to come up with a, a solution. Not a solution, an agreement, in here and which is going to be difficult.  
F: Well, well, we may not be able to ...  
M: We're not going to be able to, that's all.  
F: And that's okay. You have the right to your opinion, I suppose, and I ...  
M: I see your point of view.
2. M: Oh, yes, that makes sense to me.

Type 3: Listening response. Listening responses are short sentences or one and two word insertions, such as, "Well," "mmmmmm," or "ohhh" that indicate the speaker is listening to the other person. The sentence may also be a verbatim repetition of another's sentence or phrase.

Research examples:

1. M: Well, as I was ....  
A: mmmmmmm  
M: ... thinking about the question ...  
A: Yeah.  
M: I began looking out the window...  
A: mmmmmmm  
M: ... at a bird; and then .... The bird flew away.
2. A: Listen! Listen to me!  
M: Okay.  
F: Go ahead, we're listening.
3. A: So I say he shouldn't steal because he will get caught.  
M: Get caught.  
A: And that wouldn't be worth it.

Distinction:

Do not confuse with unfinished sentences that have the intent to break into the conversation. This should be coded as an incomplete statement / interruption (#25).

## 21. Non-competitive humour.

The speaker makes a joke or humorous statement which is not devaluing to any person in the group. The humour serves to bind the group or two people or to relax the atmosphere.

Formal example:

1. Here is a joke which supports one or all of us.

Research examples:

1. A: I said no, because I just thought that a pet, even if it is, ummm .. that it just wasn't worth as much, I guess.  
F: In India, a cow would be worth a thousand (unclear). All those cows walking around, sacred cows (A and M laugh).  
C: Well, maybe it depends on where Heinzy lives.  
M: In Egypt, it would have been cats.  
F: Poor Heinzy!  
M: Ginger would have been worth a fortune.  
F: Heinzy's up the creek (A laughs) because he's in the wrong culture!

Distinction:

If the humorous statement is in any way devaluing another person of their reasoning, code under hostility (#23). The statement must be intentionally humorous and non-competitive.

Affective conflict  
Conflictual  
Non-transactive

## 22. Resist / threaten.

There are two types of this code. Each is coded as #22. Resist / threaten is evidence of affective conflict and is non-transactive because the speaker gives no indication of representing or coordinating two perspectives.

Type 1: Resist. The speaker tries to stop the speech or action of another person. This must be an explicit statement, such as "Shut up," rather than an attempt to interrupt because one wants to enter the conversation or finish one's own statement.

Research examples:

1. F: Suppose it was a ... they'd changed the, eh, the circumstances and, eh, that the fifteen-year-old child was just about to have a wonderful date, but that man knew she was going to die ...

- A: Wow, come off it!
2. F: I won't listen to her any more if she thinks that life is not the most imp...

Type 2: Threaten. The speaker threatens that he or she will punish another speaker or will misbehave.

Formal examples:

1. I'll get you for saying that.
2. If you keep doing that, I will misbehave.

Research examples:

1. A: Look, I'm gonna go crazy with these tapes!
2. A: Boy, you're going to pay for that tonight!
3. F: If you don't sit up here and discuss, we are not going out tonight.

Distinctions:

Do not confuse with hostile statements (#23). Statements that are coded as #23 do not contain an explicit threat.

Conflictual  
Non-transactive

### 23. Hostility.

There are two types of hostility. Code both types as #23.

Type 1: Anger. The speaker attacks another position, or personality, with a statement of sarcasm or defends his or her self with an angry statement.

Research examples:

1. F: The point of the story was so you, eh, eh, ... I don't think you've really got the gist of the story there, I think that the, maybe ...  
A: I understand the story, don't make it sound like I haven't understood it!
2. F: Well, let me just see if I understand your point. Suppose ... let's just see if I really understand what, what's in your mind about this thing. Suppose the story has been changed – can you hypothesize, can you suppose a minute ...  
A: I think I can find it in me somewhere.
3. A: I'm not the one who's getting upset!
4. F: I'm amazed that there are ... I think that you're just putting me on in terms of ...  
A: I'm not.  
M: I don't think she is.  
A: F., I'm putting you on. It's a big joke, isn't it? It's funny, isn't it? Don't you think it's funny?

5. F: Suppose it was, eh, they changed the, eh, the circumstances and, eh, that the fifteen-year-old child was just about to have a wonderful date, but the man knew she was going to die.  
A: Aw, come off it!  
F: ... but the next, the next ...before she would even do that unless he stole this thing, eh ...  
A: Give her one last acid trip and say, "bye, bye."

Type 2: Undermine / devalue. The speaker belittles the contribution of another discussant or of his or herself. This statement may minimize the value of another's contribution by referring to the personal characteristics of the other discussant.

Research examples:

1. M: You only say that because you are a kid.
2. M: This is most difficult. We had never agreed on this.  
A: We're going to die ... just get squeezed out.  
M: I'm finished before we start.
3. A: No, while you're living you should have fun. But if you're going to die, then you're going to die.  
F: Well, you don't really see the point, how foolish that is with respect to how, eh, a doctor or anyone else would just give up and not try to help anybody else.
4. M: Now, look, you can stop being grouchy. We can ...  
A: We're not going to get to anything.

## 24. Unclear

Code unclear when the transcriber has not been able to transcribe a speech because the speech was not understandable. The transcriber will type the word "unclear" in place of the speaker's speech. Coding for unclear statements allows us to keep track of the number of times a participant spoke even though we cannot decipher the speech.

## 25. Incomplete sentence.

Code #25 when a speech is not completed because either the person stops speaking altogether or the person is interrupted by another discussant.

Research example:

1. M: But I don't think ...  
F: I thought Heinz was justified.

If another functional definition code has been given to the incomplete sentence because the meaning of the sentence was clear, do not code as #25.

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The above table lists the moral reasoning stages 2 to 6. The M score (refers to meaningless) is highest with Year 9 and lowest with Year 11 participants. Although not statistically significant, this outcome is not unusual since younger participants are judged to be more likely to misunderstand an answer. With regard to the general index of moral judgement development (P score), differences are slight, but not significant between the various Year Groups (ANOVA .413  $F_{(2,145)}$  Sig. 662). This is not surprising since all the participants interviewed are adolescents, and dramatic differences within this age group should not be expected. Having said that, a marginal increase is noted in the overall P score as students get older.

It must be noted that the DIT was only given to 42% of the total sample and as a result the research cannot conclude that the moral reasoning levels of the overall sample are average for its age. Given the time restrictions imposed on the research, it was understood best to work with a smaller sample rather than ask the participants to complete the test at home. It is also important to underline that the results found among the participants who completed the DIT might have been influenced by the fact that they were judged to be the more able students (for example, most of them had a higher reading age). This does not necessarily have to mean that the other students were unable to answer the questions even though they certainly would have needed more time to so. Nevertheless, it is possible that, if they have been given the time to complete the DIT, the overall average scores might have been lower. However, even taking a possible lower score into account, the measured DIT scores suggest that the present total sample are not likely to be of such a significant low level that the DAMRT should be interpreted in a unique manner given the nature of the present sample.